A WOMAN'S REVOLT AGAINST A WOMAN'S WORLD-

WE SING DIANA

BY

WANDA FRAIKEN NEFF

$2.50

WE SING DIANA

By Wanda Fraiken Neff

To Nora Deming growing up in a quiet country town, men, women, and life itself were teasing problems. Men were freer than women, she thought — less bound by custom, less enslaved by their own timidities. At Petersfield, the great women's college, and in New York and London, she found others who like herself led half-lives, suppressing their emotions and concealing their disillusionment. What was it that women wanted?

'We Sing Diana' tells the tale of Nora's search for fulfillment, — her career, her activities, her friends, and, last and greatest of all, her passionate acceptance of love. To many women the story will show in a flash of revelation the problems and abysses in their own and their friends' lives hitherto only dimly apprehended. To men it will come as a novel glimpse into a modern woman's inner life in a world where men have little part. And all its readers, regardless of their sex, will appreciate its masculine candor, its feminine intuition, its convincing sincerity, and, above all, its narrative power that permits no flagging of interest from the first page to the last.

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WANDA FRAIKEN NEFF

WE SING DIANA

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TO

THE MEMORY OF

BELLE MANSEAU FRAIKEN

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WE SING DIANA

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The Neophyte

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PART I

The Neophyte

CHAPTER I

I

Cordelia Tait was thirty-one years old when she read in 'The Diocesan News' that the sisterhood of Saint Agnes had been established in connection with the cathedral at Kewaukee. She had a thrill of spiritual exaltation. When mamma died — and every day mamma seemed nearer to that Place of Preparation which, as nearly as Cordelia could understand her rector, was somewhat akin to Purgatory — Cordelia would join the sisterhood. In cases of extreme piety, so she read, the usual age limit of thirty for novices was stretched to forty. Mamma died six months before Cordelia's fortieth birthday. Less than two weeks after her death, with the ironic clash of events which had characterized all of Cordelia's life, she received a letter from the friend of her boarding-school days, the only real friend she had ever had, a widow with one child, who had passed the seven years of her widowhood in a

pilgrimage from one health cure to another. Helen Deming, now that the climate of Colorado could do nothing for her, begged Cordelia to take care of her little girl. Cordelia read over the letter she had written to the Bishop during her mother's last illness, tore it into bits, and took upon her maidenly shoulders the matronly responsibility of rearing a child.

When the thirteen-year-old daughter of her old friend arrived, Cordelia did not know what to do with her. Nora was a spindly, pale girl, with hair and eyes of a brownish red. Just like a cow, Nora confided in one of her rare bursts of talkativeness. She wasn't a common-looking child, and she didn't appear difficult to manage.

On the first day, Nora was taken up to Cordelia's bedroom to inspect her bureau drawers and closet, which were to serve as models for her own. Cordelia had decided that the foundation of her young charge's training must be neatness. Nora examined the folded bits of ribbon and lace, the rows of handkerchief boxes, the glove boxes, with encouraging attention. The perfection of detail, which with women like Cordelia so easily becomes a passion, was amazing. Nora followed Cordelia to the closet. On a shelf near the floor were assembled the battalions of Cordelia's shoes. Her beautiful feet were her only vanity. She wore number twos, triple A, made to order by a Maronac bootmaker, who took great pride in his work. Since they were expensive, they were patched and repatched, with an infinity of patches, and the oldest dated back before Nora's birth.

'Now,' concluded Cordelia impressively, 'if you arrange your belongings in the same way, you can get up in the dead of night and find any article you want.'

'But I never want to find anything in the dead of night,' Nora commented, with the flicker of a smile lighting up her solemn young face.

Cordelia, undaunted, went on delivering her homily on the orderly care of places hidden from the common eye as a necessity of decent living. She had great veneration for the unseen corners of the world. She confessed that after she went to bed at night, if she remembered that she had neglected to place her shoes neatly side by side, she couldn't go to sleep without getting up to arrange them in the proper order.

All the time she was talking, Nora reflected on the possibility of a fairy prince's finding one of Cordelia's shoes on the streets of Maronac and thinking Cinderella had come to life again. But after several rigid days under Cordelia's régime, she decided that her guardian would never follow Cinderella's careless fashion of dropping her slipper.

A few more days in Maronac made her doubt the existence of fairy princes there — or even ordinary men. At least none came near Cordelia. Every one who visited her was a woman, old like her, generally unmarried or long widowed. Young wives walking arm in arm with their husbands, happy mothers with rosy-cheeked little boys and girls skipping beside them, passed by the brown dwelling standing close to the street, its row of

front windows neatly shuttered, the shades lowered to the nicety of an inch below the upper sash, the white curtains looped back in a geometric curve. And yet Cordelia seemed to love children. When Nora accompanied her to the shops on Main Street, Cordelia always stopped to examine the babies left outside in their carriages. Both Cordelia and Nora, as only children, had been denied all intimate experience with that most clamorously egoistic creation of our planet, the young of the human species, so that they saw none of the prose characterizing the chubby infants over whom both of them cooed rapturous endearments.

Everything at Cordelia's house was strange. Cordelia herself was totally unlike Nora's mother, only three years younger, who had kept the bright ways of her youth until the end, in spite of widowhood and shattered health. Cordelia, dressed in deep mourning, which increased the sallowness of her face and the deep circles under eyes which were a greyish brown behind thick-rimmed spectacles, following an endless line of what she called duty from one day to the next, correct, reserved, made no appeal to the riotous emotions which leaped underneath Nora's shy and quiet exterior. Nora's childhood home — of which she had a vivid memory although it had been broken up when she was only six — with its erratic ways, the uncertain comings and goings, the disorder, processions of friends and family visitings which had belonged to a happy, shadowy past, would have driven Cordelia to distraction.

But the girls at school soon became Nora's friends, and the strangeness of her transplanted existence passed away. With the adaptability of the young, she settled down in her new home. From the first she had loved Maronac, lying close to the blue stretches of Lake Michigan, with the sprawling car-ferries and passenger boats plying in and out of the river, and whistles, bells, foghorns, the cries of seagulls, the gentle dashing of the waves or beating storms so intimate a part of the life of the town. She especially enjoyed the walk to her school across the river, reached by passing through Main Street and over the bridge. She read the German signs which hung below those in English on the various business houses. Maronac, like so many towns in Wisconsin, had a large Teutonic population. When she heard the bell warning pedestrians that the drawbridge would open for one of the lake boats, she ran and leaped across before the third bell sounded. Then she stood on the other side watching the big boat slide past her, the men waving their hats to the crowds on the bridge. Often she stopped to talk to the fat old German bridge-tender. After she informed him that she was beginning to study his language, he greeted her, 'Guten Morgen, schöne Mädchen'; to which she responded, 'Guten Morgen, mein Freund.'

The chief advantage of Cordelia's house was that it was only a block from the public library. Every Saturday, while Cordelia worked at Saint Margaret's, Nora read in the library, returning late in the afternoon with

volumes tucked under her arm to read that night and on Sunday during Cordelia's succession of devotions.

Cordelia, busy with her church work, left Nora much to herself. Although her ambition to serve in Saint Agnes' had been snatched from her, the Bishop's High-Church reforms in the Kewaukee diocese had given her plenty to do in her own parish.

After a visit to England in the year 1900, Bishop Welling had returned to his see in knee breeches, gaiters, and a tall silk hat with a broad brim turned up elaborately at the sides and laced with silk cords. He was, in Scriptural phrase, like a man born again. And before all his innovations of genuflections, holy water, the reserved sacrament, and the ceremonial of the true Holy Catholic Church had been established, his locks, already touched with grey, spread over his shoulders in a fashion resembling the later portraits of the poet Milton. He had now advanced beyond even an English model. The Bishop was a good man, much beloved by both the clergy and the lay members of his diocese. He was young enough to retain the necessary physical vigor for conflict, and old enough to realize that, if he kept his temper and steadily imported a succession of earnest young English clergymen with the correct views, he would live to see his hitherto barren Low Church pastures blossom with the beauty of the true faith.

At Saint Margaret's a sisterhood had developed, bound by no vows, but in its informal and voluntary way humbly following the Bishop's new light. As senior

member of the Altar Guild, Cordelia had the responsibility every week-day of preparing the altar for early communion. For the Sunday services she was assisted by women, all of them unmarried, who were not kept sufficiently busy at home. Every Saturday they scoured the brass candlesticks and the flower vases, preserved the spotless purity of the white marble altar, spread out the linen cloths, arranged the flowers, set the holy vessels in the proper array, laid out the vestments. They stopped in their labors for a lunch in the Guild Room downstairs, and sometimes did not finish until late in the afternoon. So has religion provided, since the beginning, an occupation for its vestal virgins, who might otherwise grow weary in a world which has steadily pushed them aside.

Sometimes Nora stopped at the church on her way from the library. She sat watching the queer observances of the Altar Guild until Cordelia was ready to go home with her. The women performed their work with covered heads, Cordelia wearing a lace cap which had belonged to her mother. Every time they passed the Cross, they dropped down quickly on one knee and crossed themselves. Nora learned that the water which had refreshed the altar flowers and that which had cleansed the communion linen and the priestly robes must be thrown upon the ground, to pass away according to nature's formula.

She often went to high mass with Cordelia. Brought up in the unadorned Calvinistic faith, she was fascinated

by the ceremonial of Saint Margaret's. When the procession of choir boys passed down the central aisle, preceded by the Cross, she closed her eyes quickly to hide the tears.

II

Cordelia had invited the Altar Guild to have the refreshment of tea at her house after the hard Saturday labor, and Nora, now a girl of sixteen, was helping her pass the cups. All of Cordelia's regular co-workers were on hand: Della Schuster, a red-cheeked woman of thirty from the south side of town; Amy Henderson, in high school with Nora, but soon to relinquish her church duties for mundane employment in the grocery department of Weyhausen's store; and Edna Tillotson, tolerated because of her real gift for arranging flowers, and in spite of her unreliability and her coarse jokes.

Since the coming of the new rector, Father Stokesbury, another of the Bishop's young English importations, tall, handsome, and unmarried, Cordelia had found the Guild burning with a new zeal. Saint Margaret's, at least the feminine portion of it, was once more seeking salvation.

To-day Edna's taste in humor displayed itself in a rapid census of the young worshippers at Saint Margaret's who were beginning to come out in large numbers to the early service.

'Poor young man!' she began with the mimicry which her enemies found so distasteful. 'It's so sad him living

all alone at the rectory.' Then the real Edna emerged. 'I wonder which one o' them'll catch him.'

'I hope he won't marry in the parish,' Cordelia said.

'He might be doin' charity — makin' one less old maid in Saint Margaret's,' Edna cackled. Edna always laughed at her own jokes so lustily that she covered any possible awkward pauses.

Before the echoes of her mirth had subsided, the bell rang, a loud, determined peal. Nora was dispatched to the door. When she opened it, the new rector stood facing her.

'Miss Tait — does she live here?' He looked down at Nora a little uncertainly.

Cordelia's front hall was a place which few men had invaded. The corners of the rug showed no traces of having been kicked up by a rude masculine foot. There was an unsullied freshness to the stair carpet. The silver tray for visitors' cards on the mahogany table, with a fine old mirror hanging above it, had a nicety that only a well-trained man would have respected. And, final proof of all, the hall-tree in the corner bore no confused burden of hats and coats which all men alike have an unreasonable prejudice against hiding away in a dark closet.

Father Stokesbury took several steps forward, twisted the light rug in front of the door, and covered the card-table with his broad-brimmed black hat.

In the sitting-room there was a clatter of china as the

women rose, like a startled flock of pigeons, at the rector's appearance.

'I hoped I'd be in time for tea,' he said, shaking hands with Cordelia.

'I think you know every one here.' Cordelia beamed on her little flock.

The rector looked in Nora's direction. 'Except this young lady.'

'Nora Deming, who lives with me. Her father was a Presbyterian.'

'A heretic in our midst.'

Nora blushed with the vivid memory of her apostasy these three years she had lived with Cordelia and attended Saint Margaret's much oftener than the Presbyterian church across the street. Of late she had been a frequent visitor. The flicker of the candles, the chanting of the choir boys, the rhythm of the prayers, harmonized with the dreamy world in which she found herself at sixteen. And what made this flush of shame continue to burn in her pale face was the consciousness that she followed Cordelia to Saint Margaret's to watch Stanley Morton, who carried the Cross in the procession of high mass. Something in his blue eyes raised to the holy burden he carried stirred her — like the colored reproductions of Raphael and Andrea del Sarto in the books she searched for in the library. When she met Stanley in everyday garments on the street, she lowered her eyes and passed quickly, so that she would not lose her vision.

'We may get her confirmed yet,' the new rector was

saying hopefully, as he settled in the Sleepy Hollow chair Edna had vacated for him.

Nora, unaccustomed to the jocular fashion in men, responded with a slow smile. She felt a warm drawing power in this stranger with the dancing young eyes. When she passed him his cup of tea, she volunteered shyly, 'That's the Bishop's seat you're in.'

He looked under him with a great show of concern. 'Does that mean I shall be bishop some day?' he asked her, spreading out his hands over his shoulders, where a bishop's locks might one day be resting.

'Nora calls it the Bishop's seat because Bishop Welling always picks out that old chair when he comes here,' Cordelia explained.

Father Stokesbury made a rapid survey of the room, his gaze passing from the picture of Queen Victoria and all her grandchildren on to the view of Warwick Castle and then to the corner cupboard with its precious Lowestoft china of a lovely blue, which Nora was never trusted to dust.

'This room makes me feel perfectly at home,' he said.

'My parents were born in England,' Cordelia stated proudly. 'Yes, near Warwick. Both of them.' Cordelia was now launched upon her favorite topic. 'I've always felt as if I came from there too. I use my mother's old English cook book. I've never had another.'

'Some say the English are the most abominable cooks in the world,' he declared solemnly. Cordelia could only

look incredulous surprise. 'We have a national prejudice in favor of cabbage and its more aristocratic cousin. Candidly, I loathe the whole cabbage tribe. I came to America to get fed properly. Now your ices — I anticipate a whole summer of ices. And tomatoes — a great delicacy — I'm told they're cheap here. And peaches all summer. Cheaper than potatoes. Fancy it. In London I've seen hot-house peaches sold for two shillings each.'

Nora leaned forward in her chair. Were all men — that part of the world so mysterious, so compelling and strange to her — like Father Stokesbury? The gleam of fun on the surface, so akin to the smothered amusement at life she buried under layer after layer of shyness and fear — it was a rare joy to find it in Maronac — to find it anywhere. Sitting in the room cluttered with the tea-drinking Altar Guild, Nora saw only Father Stokesbury, her brown eyes deep red, then black with this novel discovery of kinship, like a timid young bird exulting in the first consciousness of wings that flew. Father Stokesbury turned toward her, their eyes met, and she looked quickly away.

Again the doorbell broke upon the tea-drinking; the alien Plant girls were introduced into the sanctities of Saint Margaret's. They were, like Nora, Presbyterians. Julia Plant, a large, almost fierce-looking woman, was so shy that she never visited any one but Cordelia. At the sight of the new rector, she assumed an expression even more severe, to conceal her terror of strangers.

Father Stokesbury examined the visitors critically. 'I can't understand why the heretics gather at your house, Miss Tait.'

Once more Nora raised her frightened eyes. Yes, he belonged to her world. There was no doubt of it.

The Plant girls looked mystified. But Esther, disciplined to face masses of human beings as a teacher of music and director of the Presbyterian choir, had no awe of even an Episcopal clergyman. She began to tell them about the return to town of Willy Blodgett.

'I remember how fat he was,' Cordelia said. 'Always eating during school hours. He brought a huge lunch to eat at recess every day — liver sausage sandwiches, pie, bananas, and I don't know what all. He was sticking his head in his desk to pick at it.'

'He's still fat. He came out to choir practice this week.' Esther directed her remarks to the minister, a properly adjusted company smile on her face. 'Do you know his voice never changed? It's a beautiful soprano — high and clear. Just like a woman.'

'Really,' commented Father Stokesbury.

'There's Mrs. Bates. She sings just like a man — an octave lower,' Cordelia said.

'He wants to sing in the chorus, and when he starts singing, the row of sopranos just shakes.'

'We need a good soprano at Saint Margaret's,' the rector said. 'But every useful person in Maronac seems to be Presbyterian.'

Amy Henderson, who was a militant Episcopalian,

shook her head disapprovingly. 'He's too big and fat for a choir boy,' she asserted with emphatic conviction. 'And he'd sound queer with the men. It wouldn't do.'

'Do you remember that concert we went to years ago?' Cordelia asked Julia. 'Willy sang a solo. I got to laughing so ——' Cordelia pulled off her glasses and began to wipe her eyes at the memory. 'That big fat man and then that high voice coming out — it was too much for me. And then I looked over at you, Julia, and you were just shaking. When you saw me, you went right off.'

'Willy can't even shave,' Edna Tillotson whispered to Della so loud that every one in the room heard her.

'Poor man,' Julia remarked. 'He wouldn't hurt a fly. Not like some men. Those stabbers ——' Julia emerged from her silence with a trumpet blast.

'Stabbers?' All eyes were fastened upon poor, frightened Julia.

'I was coming home from the concert the other night.' Julia directed her narrative exclusively to Cordelia, almost turning her back upon Father Stokesbury. Julia feared men even more than women. 'Over at Turner Hall. Esther was staying afterward, so I went on alone. You know how dark it is there on Sixth Street close to the bridge.' In the excitement of her tale, her threatening eyes included Father Stokesbury, who was polite attention. 'A man was behind me.'

Amy Henderson, who was very timid about going out alone at night, gave a little shriek.

'One of those stabbers,' Julia pronounced in her most sepulchral tones.

'What?'

'Stabbers. It's like a dagger, I guess. They stick it into people.'

Father Stokesbury, sunk into the comfortable folds of the Sleepy Hollow chair, sat up suddenly.

'They stab women,' Julia explained. 'This man — I heard him walking faster and faster. Then he came right up. I felt I was going to scream. He had one arm doubled up.'

'What did he do?' the Altar Guild demanded in a single voice.

'I had my door key in my hand. I always carry it that way. I was all ready to punch it in his eye. I swung out my fist ——'

'Julia Plant!' breathed Cordelia in an outburst of admiration.

'Just then two women turned sudden at the corner of Jefferson Street. He saw them an' just made off for the docks. An' they said to me, "We three'd better stick together. That man was one o' those stabbers."'

'Have they stabbed any one?' Father Stokesbury inquired politely.

At his question Nora was seized with hysterical giggles, but Julia's audience was too intent upon her reply to notice.

'Not on this side o' town. But over on the south side. Not far from you, Della. An' they'll be here next. If that man hadn't got scared off ——'

'Did you see his dagger?' Father Stokesbury inquired again.

Nora, partially recovered from her paroxysm, looked toward him. His mouth was very grave, but his eyes had a twitching uncertainty.

'Of course not. They keep 'em hidden. The first thing you know it's sticking into you.'

The rector's face disappeared behind a large handkerchief with the swift eclipse of the moon by a stormy cloud. From behind it Nora detected sounds suspiciously similar to a series of gurgling gasps.

'They stab young girls, generally,' Julia concluded.

'Of course,' Edna Tillotson sniffed. 'Who wouldn't know that?' The ignorance of her feminine circle at times was more than Edna could stand. 'You don't think a stabber would bother an old bird like me, do you, Julia? I don't believe that man near the bridge was a stabber.'

Father Stokesbury rose abruptly and made a swift departure. Nora observed that his face and his ears were very red. Cordelia followed him to the front door, replaced the card tray, and bent down to straighten the rug before she rejoined her visitors. A twinge of pain shot through her knees. At forty-three she was lame and stiff after a day spent working at the church.

'He don't seem like a clergyman,' Edna was saying when she returned. 'Not enough dignity. I saw him snickerin' away when Julia was talking about that stabber. Of course a man with his collar buttoned

behind — he ain't any different from the rest o' them.' Edna, who had no particular esteem for mankind, never lost an opportunity to state her opinion about the latest erring representative.

An angry flush rose in Cordelia's dark cheeks. 'I hope you aren't like some folks, Edna, and begin criticizing a young man before he's had a fair trial.'

Nora, uncomfortably aware of the storm raging in Cordelia, began to gather up the tea-cups. In a moment the Guild and the Plant girls hurried away. Nora stood in the middle of the sitting-room, once more seized with helpless laughter.

'What does *ail* you, Nora?'

'They're so funny. I ——'

'Well, I don't see anything to laugh at. You wash the tea-things while I'm getting supper, Nora. It's late. Most six o'clock.'

Nora, in the little wash-room adjoining the kitchen, went through the mechanical process of washing the tea-cups, her mind rioting over the comedy of the last moments. Father Stokesbury had laughed too — laughed as hard as she. He was probably laughing now. She could imagine him walking home along the quiet street leading to the rectory in zigzag steps of overpowering mirth. Nora bent over the dishpan laughing all over.

'Supper,' called Cordelia. 'Come, Nora.'

III

Old Mrs. Hill, the wife of a retired captain on one of the lake boats, came to Cordelia whenever the consciousness of her burdens was too intolerable to be borne at home.

Close upon supper she arrived, as usual. 'I just had to get away,' she began; 'Mr. Hill's been under foot all day, and I got that nervous ——'

Mrs. Hill had the sagged face and mournful expression of one who has no doubts concerning her own oppression. 'No one comes to see me,' she complained. 'Even you, Cordelia. I wonder what your poor dead mother would say if she knew how you were neglecting old friends.'

'Sometimes I get tired of people,' Cordelia admitted when she had closed the front door upon Mrs. Hill's grumblings.

'I feel sorry for old Captain Hill,' Nora retorted. 'He's lonesome too. After being a boat captain — and now sitting at home. The next time she comes, I'm going over to talk with him.'

The weary Cordelia was beginning to close the house for the night. In a feminine household this is an elaborate ceremony of precaution. First, all the windows downstairs were fastened. Then, Cordelia bolted the cellar door which led into the back hall, next the front and the back doors, and then in succession the kitchen, the sitting-room, and the dining-room doors which opened into the back hall. At last she and Nora started upstairs for bed.

Nora followed Cordelia into her room. She didn't want to go to bed. She wanted to talk to some one. She stood staring vacantly at the photographs of Cordelia's parents, the bearded man and the very cross-looking woman, which had never changed their position on the bureau. Then her glance passed to the crucifix of black and silver over the table beside the bed and the photograph of Bishop Welling in his silken robes and apron with the beautiful lace.

Cordelia, with the evening service to be read before she could close her eyes, began to turn the pages of her prayer-book. 'Don't forget to bolt your door, Nora,' she said, looking up over her thick spectacles. 'With two lone women in the house, we can't be too careful.'

'Yes, I'll remember,' Nora promised, shaking hands according to a stiff little ceremony she had inaugurated when she first came. Somehow it wasn't easy to kiss Cordelia.

She obediently locked herself into her room and slowly prepared for bed. From across the hall came the murmur of Cordelia's prayers. In bed at last, she reached for the book which that morning she had hidden under her pillow. It was 'Tom Jones,' and she had been repeating the trite experience of bold maidens who have fallen in love with that sprightly and adventurous hero.

She had excused her late vigils over the book — it was dreadfully long — by the necessity of finding escape from the life she led at Cordelia's. All those women —

their gossip and maliciousness — nothing happening. In 'Tom Jones' something was always happening.

Cordelia had given her 'Cranford' to read, but a few chapters smothered her. She got boys' books from the library — 'The Count of Monte Cristo' and 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Treasure Island.' Scott, if you skipped a lot, wasn't bad. But 'Cranford' — worse than Louisa Alcott. The open fields of Fielding brought refreshment, the inns, the highwaymen, Tom's fights, the dens of wickedness in London. Nora, sitting propped up in bed, forgot her smarting, sleep-laden eyes, her cramped arms and legs. How unmoral and unchurchly and unfeminine! Few women. And those not the women found in the parish of Saint Margaret's.

But to-night Tom and his adventures seemed less satisfactory — a little low. Her thoughts — Nora dropped her book.

When you were old like Cordelia, you thought about being good, you did piles of church work, and maybe dreamed about the joys of heaven. But if you were young — it was shameful, but young people — at least some of them — how did she know? Did the other girls at school, Nora pondered, think about — about love and about boys who never even looked at them? Like Nora gazing wistfully after Stanley every Sunday. But it wasn't Stanley. What was it then? And boys at school — Tom Baldwin who played football and wore a bright crimson sweater — Nora had prayed he would speak to her some day — actually prayed. Then she

had put herself in his way. But he was always with a crowd of boys. He didn't even see her. And the boys she had danced with at the church parties Cordelia took her to in the Guild Hall — they weren't exactly — not what one dreamed of — but ——

Now, suddenly, a tall blond man with a lilting voice which went up and down displaced Stanley and Tom Baldwin and all the other clumsy boys. Father Stokesbury had none of the uncouthness of Maronac Harbor — the way he had helped her pass the cups — he was a gentleman. Somehow he revived in her the faint memories of her father, about whom her mother had talked ceaselessly until the end. Her mother had wanted her to marry a man just like her father. The careless ease and assurance the new rector had shown. Mere boys — how she despised them! Her dreams were concrete, swift, charming the uneventfulness of Maronac Harbor with new colors and a fresh breath. Nora fell asleep, with 'Tom Jones' lying spread out on the floor beside her.

CHAPTER II

I

Nora always thought of Sunday as Cordelia's day. She rose very early, on dark, cold Sunday mornings, dewy dawns in midsummer, clicked about the house in her neat Sunday shoes, and hurried over to the church to attend to the last rite for the early communion service. At breakfast, with Della Schuster from the other side of town a frequent guest, Cordelia was generally abstracted. A few housekeeping duties held her until it was time for the ten o'clock service. Then home once more. When she covered her black taffeta dress with a large apron and began to get dinner, Nora was conscious of the irritation Cordelia never quite succeeded in concealing. But Nora had to be fed on Sundays as well as on week days.

On the Sunday following the rector's call, Cordelia stretched out on the couch after dinner to read 'The Churchman' until she fell into a doze.

'Now if Lizzie Guildford leaves me in peace,' she sighed to Nora, with forebodings concerning Lizzie, who had edged toward her after service. Ever since Father Stokesbury's arrival, she had been hinting that her services in the Altar Guild were free for the asking.

Lizzie arrived just as 'The Churchman' dropped from Cordelia's limp fingers. She entered the room with a

slight premonitory cough, glanced at herself in the pier glass between the two south windows, and sat down, smoothing out a light dress of summer silk, much too gay for a woman of fifty in Cordelia's opinion, with her ringed hands. She was the richest woman in Maronac Harbor, living alone in the large house with the mansard roof and the high tower which occupied a whole block on Main Street, built by her father with some of the profits from cheating the early settlers in the region.

'Have you had Father Stokesbury to supper yet?' Lizzie opened fire at once in her subdued, ladylike tones.

'No, I haven't.' Cordelia could be brutally direct with people she disliked.

'I think we're going to like him. Don't you?' Lizzie coughed again.

'I think so.'

'He's young, but really spiritual-minded. He's so eager for all of us to work hard for Saint Margaret's. Of course I do what I can.'

. . . . . .

'I won't have her!' Cordelia stormed afterward to Nora. 'She can't come in Amy's place. I'll lie — I'll tell her I've got some one else.'

'Of course,' Nora agreed easily. 'I have to lie most every day.'

'Why, Nora Deming!'

Nora, glancing at the clock, reminded Cordelia that

it was time to start for Della Schuster's, where they had been invited to supper.

Della lived on the south side of town in the German settlement. Her mother, scorning the generation of her countrymen who had spread over the American settlement of the north side, taking their German beer-gardens with them, clung to her old-country ways and her cheerful orange cottage in a street of blue, orange, and green houses with their gay gardens.

At the river, Cordelia and Nora were delayed by the opening of the drawbridge for one of the early passenger boats that had begun making regular trips across the lake. When the rush of traffic was resumed, two comfortable German citizens barred the sidewalk in front of them. The women took to the street, Cordelia much enraged.

'They treat women like cows,' she blustered.

'Hausfrauen,' Nora corrected her. When she was studying European history, she had interviewed the baker from whom Cordelia bought Kaffeekuchen on the subject of compulsory military training, from which he had escaped. But he had added laments for the cheap opera of his native land, the good music in the beer-gardens, the annual song-fests, and the submissiveness of German women. Even a good German lady got demoralized on American soil. And as for the natives themselves — Nora now understood perfectly the attitude of the Teutonic male toward women.

Della's mother had further enlightened her. 'Big

young lady,' she always began. 'Sixteen now. You get a fella yet?' Nora shook her head. 'You don't want to be old maid like Miss Tait. A good-lookin' girl like you. You watch out for nice fella. My Della' — Mrs. Schuster made a discouraged cluck in her throat — 'she won't go to German church. A German fella — she don't want none. She gets left, I tell her.'

'Not all girls want to get married,' Nora volunteered.

Mrs. Schuster's face spread into a wide toothless smile. 'Ah, now,' she laughed. 'Not want to. My Gott!'

Della was waiting for them in front of the house, prepared to display her garden. It was one of the prettiest Nora had ever seen, like a big fragrant nosegay, all colors, all kinds of sweet scents in an orderly profusion of bloom from early spring until frost. Most of the flowers for the church came from Della's garden.

Mrs. Schuster, a big, comfortable woman, waddled to the front door. 'Vell, vell,' she greeted Nora with her usual formula, 'how the little one has grown.'

The house, crowded with rocking-chairs and ornaments, the sofa, piled with cushions heavily embroidered with flowers and appropriate sentiments by Della, kept the two women busy all of the time. Della, with her garden, the house-work, and the Altar Guild, had solved better than Lizzie Guildford the problem of the disposal of time. But her mother scolded steadily at an old-maid daughter in the house, and complained that Della left nothing for her to do.

Cordelia and Della settled themselves among the embroidered daisies, roses, and sunflowers on the sofa and were soon launched upon a lengthy discussion of their church work. Nora followed Mrs. Schuster out to the dining-room, were the parrot was. He was a clever bird who could not only repeat a number of words, but could even sing 'My Old Kentucky Home.' Mrs. Schuster was now teaching him a little German.

When Nora stood in front of his cage, the bird winked at her solemnly. 'He talks more than any parrot in town,' she declared, turning toward Mrs. Schuster.

'Old maid — old maid — Della old maid,' shrieked the parrot.

Mrs. Schuster laughed until her little blue eyes disappeared, and her nose, like one of her delicious raised doughnuts, shook up and down. 'That's my teachin' him,' she admitted. 'Della — old maid with parrot, I tell her. Yes, he talks pretty goot.'

After Mrs. Schuster had pressed the last of a succession of cold ham, pickles, cake, jelly, and cookies relentlessly upon her guests, Cordelia had to hurry away to the evening service.

'It's like you was married to that church,' Mrs. Schuster said at parting. 'My Della the same way.'

'Old maid — old maid — Della old maid,' the parrot called after them.

Nora surprised Cordelia by offering to go to evensong with her. She liked to watch Father Stokesbury

in the dimness of the altar, his face ruddy in the light from the lectern against the snowy whiteness of his surplice. She felt a little wicked as she observed Cordelia's absorption, her fervent breathing of the prayers, her knees set firmly on the hard, uncarpeted floor.

II

With the passing of the summer Nora discovered one day that Cordelia was beginning to seem less old. She had relaxed the perpetual activity crowded into hours which might easily have been empty, and sat down sometimes without even a piece of sewing to occupy her, rocking back and forth, staring in front of her. One hot afternoon in July she came downstairs wearing a thin white lawn dress with the short sleeves and neck cut out a little, revealing shapely arms and a firm white throat.

'Do I look silly, Nora? It's so warm. Of course the dress is out of style. I haven't worn it since the summer before mamma died.'

The rector had formed the habit of stopping for a cup of tea at Cordelia's whenever he happened to be calling in the vicinity. He confessed to hurrying through his calls on the south side of town to be back in time to abuse Cordelia's hospitality. He told Nora it was Miss Tait's English blood which made her so kind to him.

'Now you, Miss Nora, you run upstairs to read a novel when a lonely man wants to be amused.'

There was the exquisite torture of seeing Father Stokesbury, and then the awful moment when Nora

realized she was unable to say a word. She just had to run upstairs and hide herself in her room. There, undisturbed by the necessity of making conversation, she could revive in her memory the delightful smile which shone all over his face, even though the hum of voices below stabbed her like pain.

Once, when she had stumbled toward the door which offered escape, Father Stokesbury had followed her and said in a tantalizingly pleading tone, 'Come, Miss Nora, please stay and talk to me.'

She could hardly get upstairs. She was trembling all over when she reached her little carpet rocking-chair near the window. Did he care? Did he want her to stay? But if the sight of her stirred him as the sound of his voice her —— No, he couldn't joke that way. He, too, would be dumb. Why should he care? He never saw her as she really was, capable of amusing talk, full of smiles, free and easy. He saw only an awkward schoolgirl twisting her icy hands in front of her, with not a word to say. He didn't care. He was just being polite. If she were prettier —— Nora went over to the mirror, swinging it back and forth in its heavy black-walnut framework to see if she were altogether plain. The girls at school said if she only did things with her hair —— But what? It didn't matter. She made a difference to no one.

Father Stokesbury played cribbage with Cordelia in the evening. It was his favorite game. He had a shameless way of inviting himself to supper, and then staying

on, hour after hour, bent over a cribbage board. Nora didn't know how long, because she went to bed.

Sometimes when she had moments of active resentment at the way a certain man had invaded her chaste maiden reveries, she tried to think as badly as possible of him to see if such measures of revenge would bring relief. A clergyman who enjoyed playing games with an old woman like Cordelia and drinking tea with a roomful of women was no real man. Nora had her ideals of the world to which real men belonged, adventurous, swashbuckling, emancipated. At least she had once made such limits to a manly sphere. But when reality smashes into dreams —— Father Stokesbury had none of the rough masculine virtues and yet — there was so much fun in him. His sober garb had no power of extinguishing his gaiety. He never seemed bored by the Plant girls, or even by old Mrs. Hill, when they intruded upon the cribbage games. He brought out his best stories for Cordelia, who tried to laugh hard at the right time.

The old house, which had been so subdued during the long invalidism of Mrs. Tait with the consequent procession of croaking and eccentric women or church visitors, and had never surrendered to Nora's youth, collapsed before Father Stokesbury. The best silver was no longer kept hidden in a strong-box upstairs. Cordelia's old-fashioned jewelry was worn once more, the quaint brooches, the heavy gold bracelets, the pearl and emerald ring.

Old Mrs. Cooper, who visited Cordelia for two weeks every summer as a rest from the Old Ladies' Home in Kewaukee, where she found herself happier than in the homes of her married sons, at once saw the change in Cordelia.

'She's beginning to get over her mother's death,' she told Nora. 'It's three years now. Poor Cordelia. She was always so prim and proper. Never running around like other young girls. Always so good to her mother. Stayed right by her. But she gave up her own young life. She really never had a chance. I don't suppose she ever walked out with any young man.'

Mrs. Cooper liked the new rector. She went every morning to the early service, stopping to chat with Father Stokesbury afterward. She made airy speculations about a possible wife for him in Saint Margaret's, calling upon Cordelia's advice as she went through her list. But Cordelia, a faithful follower of the Bishop in all his High-Church reforms, favored the celibacy of the clergy, and at most gave her approval only to a marriage outside the parish.

III

Late in August Lizzie Guildford returned from a tour of the East. She appeared at church in the elegant finery that no dressmaker in Maronac could have achieved for her. She had also imported a lorgnette, which she flourished with the proper air of easy detachment as she followed the service in her prayer-book. She held

Father Stokesbury in a long conversation at the door, where he was attempting to exchange morning greetings with all of his parishioners.

At once Lizzie detected the rector's frequent informal visits to Cordelia's house, and she discovered, without delay, three or four afternoons a week, the necessity of consulting Cordelia on some important matter which she prolonged until Father Stokesbury appeared. He, assuming Miss Guildford to be one of Cordelia's most cherished friends, treated her accordingly. Cordelia, helpless in her rage, was forced to keep up some decent courtesy to her guest. Lizzie soon began to take the whole parish to her heart. She implored the rector to use her extensive grounds for the Boys' Club, which he had organized and made his special charge. She also placed her tennis court, the only one in town and hitherto restricted to a small group in her favor, at the disposal of the young people, without qualifications. Nora, dwelling in a churchly household, began to play there every afternoon with Eleanor Porter, whose father had recently come from New York to take charge of the Dry Docks. Rumor reported that Lizzie Guildford was at last opening her purse strings. She had sent for a beautiful silver chalice set with amethysts, which she presented, not to Saint Margaret's, but to its rector. She was so eager to do more than give money to her church that she called at the rectory to discuss with her priest the possibilities of service. Father Stokesbury in an ill-advised moment suggested Miss Guildford for the Altar Guild to Cordelia.

'I won't have her!' Cordelia snapped, forgetting all allegiance to a spiritual overlord. 'She's no good. She wouldn't do any work — just show off. If she comes on, I leave.'

Naturally Father Stokesbury had a moment of pained surprise. The matter was hastily dropped, and Lizzie continued to sigh for greater spiritual usefulness.

Nora could see that her visits had become intolerable to Cordelia. She was a malicious gossip, bringing out her insinuating stories in a smooth and restrained voice in a way which infuriated the directly honest Cordelia.

'I suppose you've heard of Amy Henderson's romance,' she began one day, while she was watching for Father Stokesbury's belated appearance. Cordelia said nothing. 'She's been getting the most beautiful flowers all through the summer — carnations, lilies, and the most gorgeous roses. I saw them when I was calling on her mother.'

'I didn't know you called on Mrs. Henderson,' Cordelia interrupted.

'I'm doing a little parish visiting at Father Stokesbury's suggestion. Mrs. Henderson told me about her daughter's admirer. They don't even know who he is. Isn't it romantic?' Lizzie emitted a laugh that imitated spontaneous girlish interest. 'They're sent from Kewaukee without even a card.'

Cordelia maintained a forbidding silence.

Soon Amy Henderson's mysterious lover began to compete with Lizzie's indefatigable spiritual activity

in the town mind. Amy at church looked just the same, her light hair a trifle more elaborately curled and her face, always a vivid pink, a somewhat more pronounced carmine. Uncritical people like Cordelia considered Amy very pretty. Since she had been working in Weyhausen's, she had more money to spend on clothes. Her dresses became much more heavily trimmed with lace from bargain counters, and on Sundays she wore a white hat trimmed with two pale-blue ostrich plumes. Amy, like many blondes, considered blue her best color. It gave her the innocent expression of a healthily tinted wax doll with flaxen curls, an excellent style in dolls.

Amy's romance, in time, took definite shape. The mysterious lover from Kewaukee was forgotten in the fresh interest of Henry Shumway. No one in Maronac Harbor knew anything about him. He had come from foreign parts to take charge of the men's department at Weyhausen's, and he had made his work an immediate success. Young men, always weak before the latest novelty in apparel, began to buy their suits, neckties, hats, and shoes from Henry Shumway. He was the type of man so irresistible to an inexperienced girl, tall, dark, his hair curling back from his forehead — his envious rivals suspected art there — and with a dimple in his chin. His clothes, the necessary advertising for his business, were always of the most recent mode. Amy, the only unmarried daughter of a widow whose other children had married far beneath Amy's ideals for

them, might easily sigh before the dazzle of Henry's charms. But that Henry, with all the ready signs of a 'light of love,' should at once settle for life upon Amy, was more than Lizzie Guildford could believe.

Lizzie was expert in affairs of the heart, for she had been much courted in her youth. But each offer filled her with the fear that she was sought in marriage, not for herself, but for her money. In the end, she had refused all her lovers. During this period of extensive visits upon Cordelia, she dwelt much upon this fervid youthful period. She thought now that perhaps she had made a mistake. There was one man — he had seemed such an honest person. If she had married him, she wouldn't be so lonely now.

'I think it's disgusting of Lizzie carrying on all the time about how lonely she is,' Cordelia exploded to Nora.

'But she probably *is* lonely, Cordelia.'

'She isn't the only one. Blabbing that way about yourself and your feelings — it isn't decent. Why doesn't she ask poor old Mrs. Cooper to stay a few days with her? Mr. Cooper clerked in Guildford's store for twenty years.'

But Lizzie continued to be lonely in her big house. By Easter time she had aroused the antagonism of the whole parish by her undignified expeditions to the rectory morning, noon, and night. If she had been younger, they would have thought she was throwing herself at Father Stokesbury's head. But since she was a woman past fifty, she was merely making a fool of

herself. To the amazement of the Altar Guild, Father Stokesbury remained blind to Lizzie's folly. He continued polite through her long calls, followed the usual parish routine, and indulged in the relaxation of tea and cribbage with Cordelia.

Amy's romance remained hidden from public scrutiny until Edna Tillotson went to Mattie Stellwagen to have a grey silk dress made for Easter. Mattie told her, as a great secret, that she was sewing on Amy Henderson's wedding outfit. After much persuasion she showed Edna the wedding dress of white crepe bespattered with expensive lace medallions. Edna at once communicated her discovery to the Altar Guild, in the face of Cordelia's disapproval.

May passed, and June, but still Amy's wedding did not come off. Hints that Edna had made a mistake sadly ruffled her temper.

'I saw it with my own eyes,' she insisted.

'Perhaps it was just a nice dress,' Della explained, 'and Mattie thought ——'

'She told Mattie with her own lips it was her wedding dress.'

Lizzie made a second parish call upon Mrs. Henderson, but no one came to the door, even though Lizzie heard suspicious creakings inside. She went next to buy some tea like Cordelia's at Weyhausen's, where she waited for Amy to attend to her order.

'What's this I hear about your wedding?' Lizzie giggled.

Amy blushed, but only slightly. 'I'm not telling.'

Unfortunately Lizzie did not know Henry Shumway, and Amy's plans had to mystify her a little longer. Mr. Shumway continued to serve as a masculine ideal for Maronac youths, irrespective of his matrimonial intentions. Whether he was informed of the interest the richest woman in Maronac took in the manager of the men's furnishings at Weyhausen's depended upon Amy's discretion. In the meantime Lizzie continued to flaunt her friendship with the rector of Saint Margaret's in the faces of the whole parish.

CHAPTER III

I

Lizzie's visits to Cordelia suddenly ceased. She avoided her at church, sweeping out in the hushed elegance she affected, without a glance in her direction. Nora observed her tricks with quiet amusement. When Father Stokesbury went away for a month's vacation in July, Lizzie grasped a little respite from her ecclesiastical excesses, and absented herself from Saint Margaret's until his return.

Father Stokesbury had tea with Cordelia as soon as he resumed his parish duties. Nora managed to blunder out that she was glad to see him again, that they had missed him.

'My dear, gracious Miss Nora. I'd almost be willing to go away again to hear such words from you,' the rector laughed.

But the following day he didn't come to tea. Cordelia said he must be very busy. Then the second day he didn't come. Nora went to the front window to look down the street again and again. The next morning when she had finished cleaning her bedroom, stealing as much reading as she dared out of the midst of her work, she came downstairs to find the baking materials spread out on the kitchen table, but Cordelia nowhere in sight. She called to her from the top of the cellar steps and

looked for her in the back yard. A few minutes later Cordelia returned, took off the coat she had worn to cover her gingham dress, and finished her interrupted baking. When she sat down to dinner, there were scarlet spots over her cheekbones.

She crumbled up some bread on her plate and gulped down a cup of tea. Then she said, 'I'll leave you to wash the dishes, Nora. I'm going upstairs to lie down a while. My head aches a little.'

When Nora carried a cup of tea to Cordelia's room late in the afternoon, she found the door locked. Cordelia's voice sounded very queer and strained. She didn't want the tea. She didn't want anything. Just to lie quiet and not be disturbed. Nora could never remember Cordelia's being ill before. It seemed strange to have the quiet rooms downstairs all to herself.

In the midst of her clumsy attempts to get supper, Mrs. Hill appeared at the kitchen door.

'Where's Cordelia?' she whispered cautiously.

'Upstairs.'

'Oh!' Mrs. Hill seemed very much excited. Her old eyes had the feverish glint of one entrusted with news too great to be borne. 'Of course she hasn't told you. Lizzie Guildford tried to kill herself. With gas. They say Cordelia was over there this morning.'

'Was she out of her mind?'

'It was your minister. She was set on marrying him. She asked him. Right out, they say. Promised to deed over everything she had. And when he wouldn't ——'

Mrs. Hill's whisper grew into a lively hiss. 'That ain't the worst either. She said it was Cordelia. Cordelia after him instead o' her. She told it all over the parish. It's spread all over town. I heard it. And the Plant girls, and Edna. But this morning, when she thought she was most gone, she sent for Cordelia. To be forgiven an' die in peace. That's Lizzie for you. An' they say Cordelia forgave her.'

Nora wanted to hold her fingers over her ears. Anything to shut out that terrible story. Her lips curled in infinite scorn. 'What fools women are,' she said.

Mrs. Hill shook her head. 'You're young. You don't know. Just you wait. The smartest ones often make the biggest fools of themselves.' She rose from her chair with a deep sigh. 'Poor Cordelia. This'll come hard on her. That pride o' hers. But no one'll ever know. She's upstairs, you say?'

Nora went over and examined the steaming tea-kettle. 'She took a little nap after finishing up the baking,' she said.

Upon Mrs. Hill's departure, she carried Cordelia's supper upstairs and left it outside the door. Then she locked herself in her room. She couldn't eat a morsel. Maybe she was sick like Cordelia. Sick all over. She would think of him no longer. Those mad fancies of hers — never again. A man over whom women made fools of themselves. Lizzie Guildford — she and Lizzie together. She dug her fingers into her burning cheeks. The shame of it. Yes, and Cordelia too. She knew now

— she saw — she understood why Cordelia had changed so — become a different person. This was the end. Never again would she think of him — conjure up before her late at night in the darkness an image of blue eyes that crinkled with laughter and a voice with endearing twists and turns.

The next day she stole off to go walking with Eleanor Porter before tea-time. She could not trust herself to meet Father Stokesbury. If he came ——

Cordelia and Nora sat down to almost silent meals, Nora stifled by her guilty consciousness of Cordelia's failure to keep up a little meaningless talk. She stayed away from the house as much as she could.

A week passed, and Nora saw the rector only at church. A weight of constraint depressed the whole parish, while every one in low tones discussed Lizzie Guildford. It was rumored about that Father Stokesbury had stopped making calls, except where there was illness, and had shut himself up in his study the rest of the time.

At last, Lizzie was well again, and departed for an indefinite stay with friends. Nora wondered if Cordelia had seen her since that ghastly day.

II

Amy Henderson's mother was found dead in bed one morning. Amy sent at once for Cordelia, who stayed with her most of the time until after the funeral.

'I didn't see that Mr. Shumway to the service,' Mrs.

Hill reported to Nora. 'But he sent a huge wreath of white roses.'

The morning after the funeral, Nora, watching at the front window for Eleanor Porter to come and play tennis, saw Amy Henderson starting for the store.

'There goes Amy as usual,' she called to Cordelia, who was dusting the parlor. Cordelia came and stood beside her, and together they watched Amy out of sight. 'I'm glad Amy's got that young man,' Nora observed half to herself.

'What young man?' Cordelia demanded. 'She hasn't got him. She has nothing.' She resumed her dusting with a kind of rage.

'I thought Miss Guildford said — and——'

'Lizzie Guildford — what she says——' Cordelia broke off suddenly, as if she had been betrayed out of silence.

Eleanor's shout sounded from the next corner, and Nora bounded out of the house to escape from the knowledge of what Cordelia had tried unsuccessfully to hide from her keen young eyes.

'I'll beat you a love set,' boasted Eleanor, as they raced side by side toward Lizzie Guildford's tennis court.

By degrees rumors came to Nora which filled out what Cordelia had not said. It seemed that Henry Shumway wasn't going to marry Amy. He wasn't going to marry any one. At least not right away. He made love to all the girls — even the waitresses at the

hotel. An inexperienced girl like Amy didn't know any better than to take his empty gallantry seriously. And those flowers that came from the mysterious donor in Kewaukee — Edna Tillotson insinuated that Amy had sent them to herself.

As for Cordelia, age lay upon her once more, and her former chilling reserve, when she resumed the mourning garments she had recently put aside. Life was a steady course between home and church, back and forth, as if nothing had ever disturbed the even monotony of its ways. The house, too, settled back into its creaking joints as befits decrepit age.

III

Nora, returning from her daily walk to the end of the pier which stretched out over the lake to the fog station, with its bells and warning lights, saw a handsome collie pup bounding toward her. Roughly friendly, he leaped up against her with joyful barks.

'You beauty!' she exclaimed in delight. 'You dear young dog!'

Nora's heart leaped at the sound of a familiar voice. 'He is a fine fellow, isn't he?' Father Stokesbury said. 'The old Bishop gave him to me. It was jolly nice of him, I thought. He said this chap would keep me from being lonely at the rectory.'

Nora could not speak, but she lifted eloquent brown eyes to the young man's attempt at gaiety. There was something gone from him, the edge of the fine buoyancy

of his bright spirit dulled, the laughter less infectious and bubbling.

If she could only have told him then, putting out her hand to this lonely, discouraged young man, that she wasn't like the others, that she was his friend, and that she understood. She was desolate, too, very often. His gaiety had helped her. He must smile in the same old way again. Perhaps she could even have helped him to understand the poor women who had complicated his position in the parish. They were very unhappy, too. His brightness had uplifted them. They couldn't help liking him perhaps too well.

Yes, she understood. Knowledge of the emotional hunger of women — especially women — came in a sudden glare of illumination. You could be old like Lizzie Guildford or Cordelia, but there was something inside you which kept young. It hungered for love — for the love of some man. Amy Henderson and her pathetic dreams —— Nora had once thought only the very young of sixteen, seventeen, had hopes that life wouldn't be dull and sad. But she discerned now the truth that such hopes never left one. Always you were tormented — always — by the wish to be happy — happy by loving and being loved.

But Nora couldn't put this into words. She felt a helpless choking at her lips. She must hurry away. She couldn't even tell him she was sorry.

Father Stokesbury summoned another gallant attempt at a smile before she left him. Out of his hearing,

the sobs escaped her. 'The poor, poor women!' she wept aloud, her words lost in the boom of the lake as it beat against the shore.

Beyond the sandy beach and on top of the hill close to Cordelia's house, Nora looked back. Father Stokesbury stood gazing out on the dancing blue waters, the lively puppy close beside him, quite motionless.

PART II

The Sacred Grove

PART II

The Sacred Grove

CHAPTER I

I

When Nora saw Petersfield College hidden away in purple hills, she forgot Cordelia and Maronac Harbor. For her the venerable brick buildings draped in ivy, as exquisite as an old woman swathed in fine lace, the graceful tower above the trees, the sweep of grass and shrubbery, were little more than a setting for the girls, girls her own age everywhere, on the tennis courts, the walks, leaning out of the windows, girls destined to be her friends.

The older students in the residence hall to which she and Eleanor Porter had been assigned took immediate possession of them. After dinner they were carried off to a spread in 'Fuzzy' Leland's room. Fuzzy, dressed in a white sweater and white serge skirt, with hair as straight as wire and the figure of a twelve-year-old boy, was a champion tennis player.

Her room was the typical student domain at Petersfield. Banners representing most of the colleges of the country and chaotically varied in color scheme adorned the walls. Photographs upheld in fish-net took on dust from year to year. Tables, window-sills, the floor space

under chairs and bed held the books out of which Petersfield appeared to have been feeding the previous moment. Wicker chairs in a collapsible state and the couch heaped with cushions held all of the fifteen girls who were not on the floor.

Several of the guests were strumming mandolins and singing 'Dear Petersfield, thy hills we love,' to the accompanying gabble of the rest. There were rapid introductions, queries as to where the freshmen had come from, much giggling, and references to mysterious and confusing college events — Greek games — step singing — freshman song-fest — Michaelmas play. All their talk buzzed around Petersfield.

'You better get Miss Perkins. She's a sweet thing.'

'Not that horrid Lambert woman.'

'I'm passing off French orals, girls. He's such a darling. Just the cutest ——'

'She's brought eight trunks — fifteen evening dresses and three fur coats. And a maid came with her to help unpack.'

'I'm going to take life easy this year. You watch.'

'As if she ever cracked a book! Listen to Margie.'

'My own true love! My turtle dove!' warbled one of the mandolin artists.

The girls began to help Fuzzy pass the food. There was a roast chicken one of the girls had brought from home, some messy jelly, a miscellaneous assortment of cake, cookies, lukewarm cocoa, very sweet, pickles, chocolates. In spite of the fact that an interval of only

three hours had elapsed since dinner, the food all disappeared.

Fuzzy asked Eleanor and Nora if they played tennis. Eleanor, who had tennis ambitions, confessed afterward to Nora that she felt weak at her stomach when she talked to Fuzzy.

'If she'd only like me,' she whispered. 'Do you know she's one of the most popular girls at college?'

Nora, after the quiet life at Cordelia's, felt very tired when she got back to her room. But as she leaned out of her window and listened to the procession of girls singing as they marched around the campus, she already felt the charm of her college.

For the first week the older girls took charge of the freshmen, advised them about furnishing their rooms, informed them about various college activities, explained the course of study. Night after night the devastating spreads continued. Then at last the freshmen were handed over to the faculty.

All of Nora's teachers were women, some old, some young. The older ones seemed nicer, their voices mellow and low. The young instructors were restless, strident, metallic, inclined to be humorous over the mistakes of freshmen. College classes seemed very similar to high school. One went on studying the same old things: English — no change; history — more work in the library; French instead of German; more Latin if you wanted it or classes in baby Greek; geology instead of botany.

But college life made all the difference. It was wonderful. You sat in chapel, squeezed in a great throng, while Prexy in college gown talked about the great opportunities for women with trained minds and their responsibilities toward the rest of the world. You stood on the library steps and sang 'Dear Petersfield, thy hills we love.' At meals girls from San Francisco, from Denver, Boston, Mobile, and Santa Fe sat at the same table. There was even a girl from Hawaii. In class meeting you seconded the motion made by a charming young person in a rose dress whom you longed to know. You studied your lessons with three or four girls piled on your couch, you walked in a squadron out on the country road to the cider mill or picnicked in the grove overlooking the lake. Never for a waking moment were you left by yourself.

After a few days the freshman class broke up into its component parts. The upperclassmen had long since returned to their Olympian heights. Groups were formed, depending largely upon the halls in which freshmen lived, and also upon a common interest in tennis, plays, study. The athletic crowd to which Eleanor attached herself swept over the geographical borders of halls. The dramatic crowd fiercely guarded its entrances against all freshmen except those who manifested a slavish desire to perform the jobs disagreeable to the real stars. The society crowd, always weak among the freshmen, began to imitate its chosen leaders, who were already talking about Prom Week. The grinds, an

ignominious crew at Petersfield as at most institutions supposedly designed for the higher learning, dug into their work and remembered that a poet had been produced from the studious upperclassmen and another intellectual luminary had been sent abroad by the college for a year of study. Then there were those like Nora, undecided where they would leap.

The freshmen, however, were united by their common drudgery. They took no joy in their labors. To the query of upperclassmen why these young lambs did not frisk gaily about on the college green, they always answered, 'No time. Too much to do.' What puzzled them in their stray moments was why their elders studied so much less. They gathered in groups of four, five, or six after dinner and initiated a noisy evening of toil. Studying by one's self was too depressingly impossible. They formed frequent conspiracies to complain to their taskmistresses about their burdens, but they never did. Every one was against them. Their neighbors wanted to sleep and put them to flight. They had to learn to choose places for congregation close to meek or indifferent girls — or very sound sleepers.

Sometimes Nora revolted from this intellectual gregariousness and crept into deserted corners of the library or into some abandoned classroom. Where was all this joy that one got from intellectual achievement? she asked herself. Was it all some romantic tale created by the old for the deception of the young? Professor Steele, the grey-haired head of the history department, who

sometimes lectured to the freshman history class, told them the satisfaction of her life had come from the production of a modest shelf of volumes now used by her students. She seemed like an honest woman, but one wondered.

As Nora and her classmates looked about them, they discovered that much attention was given to friendship at Petersfield. It was different from the careless comradeship of the group in which one happened to fall. Sometimes a girl had an older member of the faculty for her friend. She worshipped her from afar, studied to please her, sent her flowers before Christmas vacation, called upon her for a few scared moments in Faculty Hall. She was called 'my dear' as a final reward. If the faculty friend were young, she made an ideal companion for picnics, expeditions to New York — only an hour away by train, a confidante to whom one entrusted the problems of a difficult home life.

Miss Goodwin, the most popular faculty friend, was so universally adored by freshmen that she was humorously designated 'The Freshman Disease.' She was neither young nor old, tall nor short. She wasn't exactly handsome, but her magnificent eyes could easily slay a victim. She affected the masculine in dress, wearing strictly tailored clothes, and mannish felt hats, shoes, and ties; her voice was full of chesty tones. Her province was the æsthetic. She wrote poetic dramas which the students acted. She read poetry aloud to choice spirits who flocked to her rooms. She was delightfully

friendly and informal. In an atmosphere in which a freshman felt lonely and often queer, Miss Goodwin restored self-respect and confidence.

Nora, much to the envy of the less fortunate, was assigned to Miss Goodwin's English class. But for some reason not entirely plain to herself, she remained a cold auditor of her poetic and dramatic displays.

'No, I don't care for her much,' she stated frankly to those who demanded to know if she wasn't 'crazy' about Miss Goodwin. 'She tires me, I guess. I didn't come here to take a course in Miss Goodwin, and we don't learn much English.'

From such apostasy the girls shrank away. Before the month was over, Nora was transferred to another section. She was a little worried. Had the fire of Miss Goodwin's eloquence grown cold before her critical young eyes?

The weaker of Miss Goodwin's disciples dropped down to the lower plane of friendship with other girls, usually members of their own class. Friendship was the great human experience. Nora, observing these sudden infatuations, realized that she and Eleanor did not fit into the strict college interpretation of the word. Eleanor, trailing after Fuzzy Leland, was already on the freshman tennis team. Nora, too, desired a friend.

Nora was studying history in her room the night her neighbors had adjourned to the assembly hall to hear a famous woman lecture on the question of woman suf-

frage. In a community life quiet moments must be snatched when they could be.

A knock at her door struck the moment of Robespierre's ascendancy. Emily Moorhead, a tall dark girl from the opposite end of the corridor, perched on Nora's couch.

'I hope I'm not disturbing you, dear,' she said, stretching out like a sleepy cat. 'I saw the light under your door.'

There was something about Emily which brought back to Nora her earliest childhood terror. Waking up from a nap, she had seen crawling toward her, with silent, crouching tread, a striped creature which resembled the tiger in her alphabet book. Her screams had brought her mother running into the room. But all the assurances that the visitor was a nice tiger-pussy from next door could not efface an experience which repeated itself always at the sight of a cat. Yes, Emily, languorously sleek and purring, was exactly like a cat.

'I'm so glad to find you alone, Nora. I want to know you better. Don't you often feel there are people about you — something inside of you reaches out to them? You long for them.' Emily dropped her lazy feline pose and sat erect. 'I'm like that. There are few people here I care about, but those few ——' Emily's tone was significantly tender.

Nora had been instructed by Cordelia to distrust a diagnosis of the heart in this open fashion. She secretly hoped she didn't belong to Emily's few.

Emily began to save a seat for her at meals; she made lengthy visits after dinner when Nora wanted to study. She asked her advice about clothes. But Nora felt no devotion growing for this new and inconvenient shadow. She tried to avoid Emily, but with no great success.

One evening Emily stayed longer than usual. Suddenly she threw her arms about Nora. 'You darling. You don't know how I love you, Nora. I want to be your only friend — the only one you trust your secrets to. I'm so lonely. No one understands me. I yearn to be loved.'

Nora detached herself violently and avoided the sight of Emily's darkly flushed face. 'I don't like people that way,' she said coldly. 'And I'm very sorry, but I've got some work to do to-night.'

Emily slammed the door after her. The next week silly little Sally Winthrop was walking through the corridors with Emily's arm over her shoulder. They were inseparable. Nora looked the other way.

II

With the spring, many of the freshmen, Nora among them, developed nerves and bad tempers. They complained that they couldn't sleep at night. Mary Hopkins surreptitiously dragged her couch across the hall to her friend Mabel Witherspoon's room. The next morning a very chilly housemother superintended its journey back. The college physician gave the verdict that injudicious study and disregard of the rules about

exercise were responsible for the decline in freshman morale. Her patients said among themselves that it was too much Petersfield.

The college, in spite of its proximity to New York, prided itself upon its seclusion from the world. The village which supplied the material needs was three miles away. The simplicity of life many of the girls would never experience again. But after eight months of sylvan peace, the freshmen sighed ungratefully for the world. They regarded the juniors and seniors returning with their chaperons on the nine o'clock train after a day in New York with the awed wonder of mediæval villagers gazing upon a pilgrim with cockle shell and staff back from a holy shrine.

Talk circled around teachers, studies, other girls, summer vacation. Boys were mentioned only in vague generalities. Except during prom week the only males who invaded the campus delivered groceries, meat, or ice.

'I'm going to flirt with the baker's boy,' Gladys Spencer threatened.

Could one be sure that one's fellow freshmen never thought about love? Nora had abased recollections of the hours she had wasted dreaming — longing — that some day —— Even at Petersfield — almost like a convent — a nunnery — she could not entirely keep burning desires out of her mental labors. If those ridiculous women had let Father Stokesbury alone —— He was the finest man she had ever known. Heroes, great figures in

history, King Alfred, and Cromwell, and Garibaldi, and Louis XV (she had a catholicity in her ideals as a result of the freshman survey history course) — they dazzled one's imagination, but one sighed for some real person. Alone on walks — wanting to be alone — to think —— She wouldn't go through life like Cordelia and Lizzie Guildford, and then when it was too late —— Her dreams dealt with unrealities. A hero — something to attach the virtues one admired to — a kind of spiritual clotheshorse for the imagination to play upon. He looked a little like Father Stokesbury. Not a clergyman, but with his smile and enigmatic blue eyes.

Of course one had moments filled with flattering theories about maidenly self-sufficiency. When lessons went well. Then again ——

III

At the beginning of her second year, Nora met Cabell Westley, a classmate from Georgia, who occupied the room just above hers. Cabell was frankly bored with Petersfield. She dragged her feet when she walked and powdered her nose during the class hour. Her favorite evening amusement was to dress up in party clothes, and spend endless time on a cluster of curls which she draped over her left ear. When she was properly arrayed, she descended the fire-escape which crossed Nora's window. She leaped down from the window-sill airily, and surveyed her friend studying.

'You're killin' yourself, child. It's my duty to give

you a minute o' rest. How d' I look, darlin'? Fit to kill?' She pirouetted in front of Nora's mirror, singing in a monotone:

> 'I'm dyin' for some one to love me,
> Some one to call my own.'

Then turning suddenly, she added in an attempt at desperation, 'I mean it, honey. I honest am.'

Writing letters to her boy friends in Georgia and reading their replies to an available victim demanded much of her time. For Nora, these passionate declarations of love had an uncanny fascination. Cabell had been engaged numerous times. Her fiancés, past and present, in an alternating row of silver and ivory frames on her dressing-table, she arranged and rearranged according to their place in her favor at the moment. From day to day they bobbed up and down the line like contestants in an animated spelling-match.

She liked to review their qualifications. 'Nice boy. Wonderful eyes, don't you think? But such a jealous disposition.' And of another. 'He's got heaps o' money. But drink! Honey, he'd swallow the ocean if you'd sell it to him over the bar. And gamblin'! He's no mamma's boy to settle down with. And I love my peace an' comfort. A nice easy pair o' old shoes the mornin' after a dance; that's my idea of a husband.'

She explained in detail how easy it was to be engaged to two or even three boys simultaneously, if a girl used her head a little. 'Keep 'em apart. One at Sewaunee. The other at Athens. An' one in Atlanta.'

Between classes and before and after meals Cabell sauntered up and down the corridors in her shambling fashion, seeking excitement and singing her usual plaint, 'I'm dyin' for some one to love me.'

Nora heard a whistle and smelled tobacco one night after she had gone to bed. A window above her was opened. There were stealthy words exchanged with a deep voice below, suppressed giggles, and then high heels clattered on the fire-escape. In the brightness from a light below, Nora saw Cabell distinctly as she passed her window. She at once closed her eyes and pretended deep sleep.

When Cabell's midnight flights into the unknown with a village youth of no untarnished reputation finally were made known to the faculty, Cabell was doomed to return to Georgia. She made farewell visits to all her friends, her jaunty cheerfulness quite untouched by the disgrace which ought to have weighted her down.

'Good-bye, honey,' she said to Nora. 'Now don't you think naughty things about poor little Cabell. She just had to keep in practice.'

From the first letter, Nora gathered that Cabell's technique had suffered little. After a second, Nora never heard from her again.

IV

Eleanor and Fuzzy were patient with Nora's attempts to be athletic. They showed her about strokes, chops, and their deadly effective service.

'You must keep at it,' Fuzzy admonished her. 'Swing your racquet in your room every evening. I keep up practice that way all winter.'

'Don't think of anything but the game while you're playing,' Eleanor added.

'But I can't help thinking of other things.'

'Then you'll never make a player,' they told her.

Nora tried basket-ball next, indoor baseball, skating, and skiing, but she went through them all in the same undistinguished fashion. She was greatly disappointed, for she wanted to belong to the athletic crowd, in her opinion the sanest and the most vigorous in college. They were a handsome, cheerful group, with none of the sick fancies of Gwendolen Morris, writer of exotic verse for the college paper, whose brains Nora was forced to admire. But it was hopeless to try to compete with others in brawn and muscle.

Her days were crowded with ill-assorted studies. Chemistry ate up her time as relentlessly as mathematics her freshman year. But she was still in the stage of believing what she was told, and did not discredit the theory that the necessary mental discipline comes from the hated subjects which are conquered with the greatest pains. She spent beautiful spring afternoons in the nauseous atmosphere of the laboratory, going over experiments again and again before they came out correctly.

She left the laboratory late one afternoon and strolled up the hill on the other side of the lake. When she heard

voices, she dropped down under a tree to escape company. She kept very still. The voices came nearer and nearer. Nora closed her eyes. A low voice, a high piping voice — Minna Horton and Gwendolen Morris in one of their interminable debates. If they would only go on up the hill.

The low tones came from a spot not far away. At first she disregarded them. Then a chance phrase interrupting her thoughts froze her into immediate attention. The words of lovers — exchanges of devotion, undying devotion. Nora opened her eyes. The two girls embraced, kissed each other again and again. She was conscious of the drooping narrowness of Gwendolen's shoulders, the slenderness of her neck, as she threw herself against Minna's bulky frame.

Suddenly, the two girls fell apart. Whistles and catcalls echoed from the hilltop. A young boy, who had been cutting grass with a scythe, was shouting and jeering down upon them. The grin on his red face and the cackling derision of his laughter were like the capers of a satyr invading a nymph's sacred bower. The girls fled to the protection of the campus buildings.

Nora lay buried in the fresh spring grass, her hands pressed hard against her eyes. Finally she roused herself to escape to her room. The stream of girls passed her unobserved.

Minna Horton was an honor science student with ambitions to be a doctor. Gwendolen was the literary genius of the campus. They had been intimate friends

since their freshman year, a little too exclusively interested in each other, perhaps, but among the cleverest girls Nora knew. And all the time possibly, this poison. Nora had a sick memory of the fungi she had studied in botany, the rank growths, forms of life springing up in unhealthy places, feeding on rot — slime molds found in damp earth and decaying vegetable matter. Creation wasn't all clean and pure. Nor human relationships.

Nora had got her first shock in Maronac. A saloonkeeper there, a very low man, had a meek little daughter who had gone to school with her. She remembered the girl's downcast brown eyes. Freda had suddenly disappeared. The girls whispered. Nora heard them. Like Beatrice Cenci and her father.

But girls — two girls. She couldn't understand why she felt faint at the thought. Emily Moorhead, her first year. Only instinct, like the swift revulsion of a young animal sniffing at a poisonous weed, had held her back.

It wasn't their fault. They hungered for affection. Was it a choice between this and pranks like Cabell Westley's?

Petersfield was, after all, not very different from Maronac Harbor. It duplicated the unequal proportion of sexes, the narrow conversational boundaries, the emotional strain. The only difference she could discover was that there were no old people at Petersfield — at least none of the professors was very old — no babies, no dogs, and no cats except in the college kitchens.

Among the meagre sprinkling of men, not particularly imposing, there was none equal to Father Stokesbury.

What were the girls to do? They wanted something which college had not given them. Intellectual ambitions, the splendid women on the faculty, the vigorous student body were not enough. But what — what else?

Nora herself was the same girl who had left Maronac Harbor. She had gone on all this year perpetuating her freshman follies. Her arrogance still isolated her. She had distrusted girlish intimacy because of Emily Moorhead. She had scorned friendship with the women who could have given her some of the lessons of age and wisdom because other girls fawned upon their professors and used their favor for ulterior ends. The intellectual hunger, the longing for companionship, which made her suffer in Maronac were still unsatisfied.

And what Cabell had — what other girls wanted — the chance to be admired, loved. Never in Maronac Harbor. No one had even glanced at her. Would she finally, like Minna and Gwendolen — in her desperate need to be loved —— No, never. But what was she going to do?

V

Nina Willoughby, a tall, slim girl who wore, with bored nonchalance, the handsome clothes her family heaped upon her, had recently taken up woman suf-

frage. She had marched down Fifth Avenue in a procession of suffragettes, and her photograph had appeared in the 'Times' the preceding Sunday. All Petersfield now worshipped her.

She was urged to organize college enthusiasm for political enfranchisement. The place of the first meeting, to which Mary Howe dragged Nora, was strangely enough a deserted graveyard. Nora, from a section of the country fresh in its memories, had spent many an afternoon reading the inscriptions of a preceding century upon the lichen-covered brown stones lying flat in the tall weeds.

When Nora and Mary arrived, Nina and her subalterns already had a goodly number of followers gathered around them. In the spring twilight the birds, long ago retired to slumber after a busy day, were chattering a lively protest at being disturbed.

A program of eloquent speeches resulted in the formation of the Woman Suffrage League. At once the new reformers burned for action. Nora, on the fringe of the crowd, listened in amazement to Nina's proposal that they prove the seriousness of their protest against the cruel exclusion of woman from the public affairs of her community and country by spending the night in the graveyard with no bed but a hard flat stone. Shrill shouts of approval rent the still night.

A graveyard — sleeping there — votes for women — Nora tried to puzzle out the connection. While she was still weighing this new college problem, one of the

officials of the Woman Suffrage League had separated her from Mary, and she was stretched out on a tombstone, very hard and cold, with the stars and a young moon shining down upon her. Her unaccustomed bed got colder every moment. The weeds tickled her nose — made her sneeze. Her back — her neck — it was as if some unseen monster were taking great icy nips out of her raw flesh.

Next to her squirmed Frances Thompson, a freshman in Nora's hall. 'I wish I could sneak home,' she whispered. 'I'd rather sleep than vote any night.'

'I won't stay here,' Nora whispered back. 'I'm going to chuck it.'

'Come on.'

The two bobbed up, and slowly, on hands and knees, began crawling toward the stone wall near them. The birds began to scold afresh. A dog barked. They stopped an instant, and then crept on. The tall weeds assisted their escape, and the moon whisked under a cloud. A few more paces, and Frances began to giggle. Nora gave her a frantic punch. They clambered over the wall, their hands and legs cut by blackberry thorns. On the other side, they halted, found out where they were, and then began to run.

The chapel clock was striking. They flew over the rough ground. A moment more, and they were inside the doors before they were locked for the night.

Safely inside Nora's room, they stood examining each other. Their faces were scratched. Frances's hand was

bleeding. Nora's pleated skirt was torn by the last fence. Throwing themselves on the couch, they rocked back and forth with wild laughter.

Nora began to rub her aching back. 'It's got — the — the print of Eliza Cook's obituary,' she snorted between her seizures. '"Eliza Cook, died in childbed 1801. Requiescat in peace."'

During the next day, Nora observed her sleepy classmates under Professor Steele's all-seeing eye. They sneezed. There was a suspicious aroma of camphor about them.

That night the New York papers came out with blazing headlines:

PETERSFIELD GIRLS MAKE PROTEST
NIGHT OF VIGIL IN GRAVEYARD
VOTES FOR WOMEN

So this was Nina's scheme. Publicity for woman suffrage. Women were a queer crowd. In England they heckled members of Parliament and fought the police. They seemed to enjoy being dragged off to prison and starving themselves. What would they start doing in America if fools like Nina had their way? As for Nora herself, she was done with woman suffrage.

Prexy was furious. For several days it looked as if the seniors who had started the affair might not receive their diplomas.

Miss Goodwin's latest poetic drama, fortunately, diverted the college authorities from Nina's escapade.

The play was to be presented in the new open-air theatre. Practically every girl in college was dragged into it. Nora hurried away from laboratory to drape herself in Greek robes. The play was written in the classical spirit, with the girls personifying various abstractions never quite clear during rehearsals, and with dancing throngs weaving in and out among the maidens declaiming Miss Goodwin's resounding hexameters.

The evening of the performance, the sun set over the pines in front of the audience with a melodramatic arc of crimson and orange as the opening songs began. Never, all the oldest professors said, had there been a more perfect spring night at Petersfield. The white-robed Grecians in their choral rites did honor to the trees, the flowers, the fountain, the sky, and last to their own maidenhood, represented by a tutelary spirit, Miss Goodwin, a little too stout for classic draperies. As they circled round her, they sang a concluding devotional before the final dance of the maidens ended the play.

'It's the true spirit of our colleges,' Nora's Greek professor announced afterward. 'Our reverence for girlhood, for maidenhood. Miss Goodwin has placed our modern attitude in Greek form with real genius. But the intellectual world has always been Greek. It's the spirit of the mind.'

The play had been great fun. During the excitement of the past days, even Nora had got loose from her moorings. She watched Miss Goodwin seated even more

securely upon her throne, her laurel wreath fresh and shining, with a quietly amused smile.

'Isn't she wonderful?' breathed the freshmen.

Nora, in the last expiring moments of sophomore scorn, curled her lip in a final ironic quiver. 'Wonderful,' she agreed.

CHAPTER II

I

Nora returned to college in the fall of 1914 dressed in a new suit equipped with the latest embarrassment of fashion, a long skirt so tight that the ingenuities of dressmaking had conceived a slit on one side which permitted the wearer to take a mincing step. But over the gash in the front of Nora's skirt Cordelia had draped a pleated silk curtain which covered Nora's leg. On the campus, crowds of Petersfield girls, all wearing crippling garments like Nora's, some with the addition of flounces at the top, which stuck out behind like the bustles of a preceding era, learned for the first time that a war had begun in Europe.

The adult world had been murmuring something about the assassination of a certain European prince no one had ever heard of before, but a college generation had not anticipated all this unnecessary fuss about it. Petersfield in its leafy luxuriance of early September appeared unchanged. But it developed that the war had already touched Petersfield. Professor Steele and other members of the faculty had been held in Europe. Some of the girls on holiday jaunts in France, Italy, and Germany had not returned. When all of them finally trickled back, they brought tales of lost baggage, terrible crossings in steerage quarters resembling the coops

built for travelling poultry, and rumors of a stream of French and Belgian refugees already homeless.

Professor Steele at once hung a large violently colored map of Europe in the hall outside of her classroom door, punctured with vari-colored pins, which she moved from day to day. Strange names gradually took on the familiar accents of friends. The Marne — not one of the girls had ever heard of it before — turned out to be a river; Rheims — there was a picture of the cathedral in the library; and of course one had a vague idea of Antwerp.

A popular college sport developed from the crowds gathered around Professor Steele's map between classes. It was the ambition of the student body to catch her at her daily pin-shifting. One would feel, a jocular senior commented, almost like God, to be making pins jig up and down in this apparently aimless fashion. The English and the French, red and orange in Miss Steele's scheme, developed a humorous habit of jumping in one direction, then veering off in some mad chase, and finally returning to their original position. It really was a huge joke.

The college, in a body, marched to the village church the first Sunday in October to join in the prayers of Peace Sunday. It really was a terrible bore, planned by Prexy, who thought the student body should try to wake up the village. They marched back very hungry, with unbecoming levity, to their college retirement, quite convinced the village had not appreciated their

valiant effort. The starving Belgians then obtruded upon their customary peace. What would it be next?

During the dull November rains which drove the girls to the library, Nora made her great college discovery. History had suddenly become the most fascinating subject in the world. One day she had crept into a seminar room, discovered empty in an idle scouting expedition at certain hours of the day. Left alone with a pile of books, she experienced what was akin to religious conversion. She left the library another person. The war may have helped to lift the scales from her eyes; or it may have been the transformation in Professor Steele, about which both faculty and students were beginning to wonder.

A cold and detached scholar had suddenly caught fire. In the fall of 1914 she taught with a passionate earnestness which crowded her classroom. Her big course for many years had been the political and social study of modern Europe, upon which she had written three solid volumes, highly respected in the world of scholarship. Every summer she had wandered from one European city to another, reading in the libraries of London, Paris, Berlin, tramping their streets, talking to the professors in the international fashion which only the universities seem to have learned. But in her weighing of evidence she had been so fearful of rash judgments, of partiality, of her own conclusions upon subjects never perfectly understood by an outsider, that her lectures had been cautious and uninspiring. No one could tell

what had made the change in her. Her opinions about the war she kept to herself, preserving an apparent rigid neutrality that the Executive of her country would have approved. But Nora detected something which had never been there before.

Early and late Nora toiled in the library. The war had become a gigantic spectacle, a new game for an initiate into historical mysteries. She began to search for the source of this terrible hatred which was destroying Europe. The raid of English seacoast towns, the threatened German blockade, the Zeppelin raids on Paris, the sinking of ships carrying American passengers, which a few sentimental professors at Petersfield were using not only to prove the invidious cruelty of German ingenuity, but also to develop an emotional reaction among the student body, had different uses for her.

In Maronac she had lived among German people long enough to suspect claims made for their diabolical supremacy. What surprised her was that they had thought to do all these terrible things before their enemies. Germans were slow-moving in Maronac, sentimental about Christmas trees and their own music, and a little stubborn in holding to an old-world attitude toward women. But they were good neighbors and hard-working citizens.

She had a brief but vivid moment of emotion when she read in Cordelia's cramped and almost illegible handwriting that Father Stokesbury had sailed for England to offer himself as an army chaplain. What

relief! The war had at least offered him escape from that pack of adoring women who had drawn their tight cordons to imprison him in their female world. But he had got back to the real world — the world of men. The soldiers in the back lines — the hospitals — how they would be refreshed by his boyish fun!

The war finally captured Petersfield undergraduates. Emily Moorhead collected money for Belgian babies, and Gwendolen Morris wrote a poem about bleeding France, Lafayette, and sister republics. In the library Nora began slowly building up the impartial historical spirit. The dead in Europe were still very far away.

II

Since the collapse of the Woman Suffrage League, feminism had held Petersfield only fitfully. When a famous Scandinavian woman came to lecture the previous year, the intellectuals learned that the noblest creature among women was the unmarried mother. But where in a place like Petersfield does one find a glorious mate like the one described in the lecture, and when he is found, how does one circumvent college authorities?

'Remember Hannah Dodsley,' croaked one of the intellectuals not yet converted to the new idea of having babies without husbands. Hannah, a meek little freshman two years ago, had been sent home because she was going to have a baby.

'I don't think many women will want them — that way,' another suggested delicately.

'Do all women with husbands want babies?'

'And if she has three or four already, does she want any more — with a husband or without?' queried one of seven daughters.

Evidently there were two sides to the question of maternal glory.

In the meantime the intellectuals sighed to make the world better. Since the passing of the Home Rule Bill, Ireland promised to need them no longer. They had always had socialistic dreams, but now for the first time they called themselves the Socialist League. Ellen Standish, their president, the daughter of a cotton manufacturer in New Jersey, planned to take over the management of her father's mill the following summer. Other members formed equally ambitious programmes.

The new professor in sociology, Mr. Michael Powys, had some close connection with their becoming pacifists. He was a phenomenon in Petersfield, young, handsome, intense. His blue eyes burned with the flames which reform the world.

Mr. Powys had been discovered in Europe early the preceding summer by one of the more adventurous economists, who invited him to Petersfield. Naturally the war held him on his native British shores. He was, therefore, regarded as only another of the war casualties, and his proposed courses of lectures struck from the calendar. But in January he arrived unannounced, and with no explanations concerning his appearance. It was rumored that the bribes and the prayers of a

wealthy father had got him out of England, where his views of non-resistance threatened to make trouble. Although some of the faculty declared he was a deserter from duty and a traitor to his country, it was difficult to pack off a person of mature years who had been invited to Petersfield.

Not even for the first day did the new sociology professor show the stealth usually associated with smuggled goods. He proclaimed his philosophy with the compelling brilliance of a Broadway street sign. In dealing with the problem of poverty, the subject of one course of lectures, he offered socialism and the elimination of war as the only salvation for a working population. His world, he explained, was not Britain, but the toilers of every country, to whom he wished to give a decent existence. His brotherhood idea was dazzling to the intellectuals, who had long ago given up a religion which teaches the same gospel. They rallied around Mr. Powys, Nora among them now, to convert Petersfield.

In Nora's dreams a very charming young man with flowing neckties matching the deep blue of his eyes stood by her side in all her vigorous plans to uplift her fellow men. During the class-hour, too, she found her attention wandering from Mr. Powys's lecture to Mr. Powys himself. His curly locks gleamed like sunshine in the bleak greyness of a winter day. With his climaxes — and Mr. Powys made frequent use of climactic effects — a ruddy glow coursed through his cheeks and made him as radiant as a Greek god.

From Mr. Powys she learned rapidly the superior virtues of the poor, their instinctive wisdom. For his pacifism she had a less immediate reaction. The poor, being closer than fighting Europe, seemed enough to begin on. Her intensive study of poverty and the stern precepts of the twin science, economics, resulted in a chance to live during the month of June in a New York settlement house situated in the most populous section of the lower East Side.

Mr. Powys had made a similar experiment in surveying poverty at close range.

'While I was at Cambridge, I spent one long vac. in London. Down near the docks, you know. An interesting region. For the depths of misery I know no better place than Shadwell. Possibly Limehouse is a trifle rougher. Of course there are no slums in New York equal to ours in London.'

III

Mary Howe, who believed in a varied human experience, convinced Nora that it was her duty to attend Junior Prom. Mary provided one of her superfluous party dresses and also Mr. Downing.

Importing men for Petersfield dances required elaborate manœuvres. Girls with brothers were suddenly popular. The Prom crowd from the nearer men's colleges could be counted on annually for reënforcements. Any man with fair skill in dancing, a dress suit, and the price of a railroad ticket, could, if vouched for by a

Petersfield girl or any remote social connection of hers, be an acceptable guest.

Nora's dancing partner was presented to her a few moments before the grand march began. He danced well enough, did not immediately attempt the persiflage that is common exchange at Proms, and had no conspicuous deficiencies. Almost at once, however, he divined that Nora was one of those strong-minded girls. Accordingly his first one-step was enlivened by a running commentary on votes for women.

'Of course they've got to serve in the army when they get the vote.'

'But there aren't going to be any more wars when women have the vote.'

Mr. Downing was much amused. 'No more war. Of course women never have any little wars among themselves. A woman's tongue — why do we hear so much about it?'

Nora looked stony. 'You won't hear any more from mine on this subject.'

Mr. Downing, being a polite youth, shifted the conversation to sport. He let Nora know, without too much directness, that he was a long-distance runner at his college, first stroke on the crew, and a player to be reckoned with in tennis tournaments. Then he inquired about Nora's athletic prowess.

Nora wasn't an entire success at the Prom. To men less obliging than Mr. Downing she had little to say. The giggles of the successful girls around her she had no

marked ability to imitate. What was there to talk about at a dance? And these college boys — they were like big clumsy babies. Now if she had dared to ask Mr. Powys —— Toward the end, the muscles of her face ached in her efforts to keep up a battery of cheerful smiles. She thought longingly of her bed as her feet rebelled against the unaccustomed exercise.

So this was what girls called fun. They marked off the days on the calendar until the supreme event of a college dance. They talked it over for hours, days, weeks afterward.

The tiresome ordeal dragged to its conclusion. Nora gave Mr. Downing a brisk good-night and hurried off to bed.

In the morning she had to hear the last sleepy trickles of reminiscence about the dance. 'Jack Downing said you were awfully good-looking,' Mary confided. 'But I guess you were a little too high-brow for him. He invited Sally Easton to his Prom after his first dance with her. Sally's an awful fool, but she's pretty and she dances well. She thinks Jack is just wonderful.'

The library was beautiful peace and security on a Saturday morning. Nora hid herself away in the deserted seminar room and piled books all around her.

Once more the monotonous college routine, as bad as the trench warfare revealed by Professor Steele's maps. The Eastern Front had become too complicated even for undergraduate jokes.

Then May fête, delicious relief. A masque, repro-

ducing in cheesecloth and gilt paper the magnificence of the entertainments given in honor of Queen Elizabeth, initiated a large proportion of the college into the mysteries of dyeing and design. The fête, postponed for two days on account of rain, finally came off the evening the news of the sinking of the Lusitania reached Petersfield.

Final examinations mercifully obliterated the horror of the tragedy.

IV

The glimpse of New York from the train window was all that Nora had yet seen of the city, which was escape and adventure for Petersfield. The tall apartment houses exposed to a traveller their shabby walls and the dingy washings flapping on the roofs and in dark courts. The bedding was spread out on the fire-escapes. Strange-looking people leaned out of the windows, staring listlessly at the passing train. Children swarmed in the streets, darted in and out of the traffic, as if they were playing a grim game of life and death.

The settlement house, an old red-brick four-storeyed structure indistinguishable from its neighbors, faced a street jammed with pushcarts and the babble of foreign tongues. The children left off their matching of wits with the vendor of chocolate and apples to crowd around Nora and called out, 'Teacher — Hello, Teacher.'

The residents of the settlement, gathered around the dinner-table, presented strange contradictions to a newcomer. Mrs. Chambers, the stately housekeeper, in a

velvet dinner gown which revealed exquisite shoulders and arms, was seated opposite the head resident, Miss Burton, a weary-looking woman with a hard knob of grey hair perched close to her forehead. Miss Saunders, a frivolous pink blonde elaborately dressed, assisting Mr. Schwartz with the boys' clubs, was an amusing contrast to Miss Graham, in charge of the girls' clubs, who came in after the soup with her hair bearing the imprint of a hat worn all day.

While the others talked of their activities in a jargon full of terms incomprehensible to Nora, Mrs. Chambers, in the fashion of a practiced hostess, commented on the heat, the noise from the pushcarts, the foreign quality of the East Side.

The street beyond Nora's window was astir at one and two in the morning, and children were still shrieking at their games. A queer odor like that of old clothes stored in damp trunks filled her room, mixed with smells of new food and seasonings. She longed for a single whiff of Maronac Harbor or a stiff breeze from the Petersfield hills. Strange tongues clattered in her ears. Then at last the neighborhood folded itself away in its crowded dens, and Nora fell asleep.

The night classes, presided over by volunteer workers, met in the schoolhouses of the district. Miss Graham assigned to Nora an animated group of girls who seemed to be equipped with a knowledge of English sufficient to talk about everything but the lesson. Having anticipated the college generation in the generous use of

rouge, they had the appearance of buxom vitality, in spite of crowded living and working quarters. Their main interest was to remind their teacher of the exact time for the closing of the lesson, so that they could rush down to the lower floor of the school building at the dramatic minute the boys were being dismissed. An hour of dancing in the basement gymnasium followed the classes. But the boys, in a neighborhood inclined to forensic exercise, prolonged their debates long past the class hour. Often they used the entire dancing period for a little extra oratory, and the girls had to dance by themselves.

At the weekly settlement-house dances Miss Burton marched up and down the two spacious rooms, probably once the drawing-rooms of a prosperous Wall Street merchant, to keep the dancers from amorously remote corners. Her lively interest in the courtship and marriage of the young people made her eager to preserve a rigid system of etiquette which would prevent any irregularity.

Even greater than her sympathy for young love was her enthusiasm about babies. She was always capturing some clever young doctor and bringing him to the clinic in the big bare room on the second floor of the house; and she discovered nurses with the necessary variety of linguistic equipment to pass on the doctor's advice to the mothers. Miss Burton herself presided over the weighing of the infants, as pleased over the gains of the puniest ones as a juggler with some new feat. Women

who had never had children of their own seemed to love babies with the most tender devotion. Cordelia had the same wistful interest as Miss Burton. But the mothers of the numerous settlement progeny, while Miss Burton was busy, displayed an alertness in collecting under their shawls the free samples of babies' food on display. They pushed and jostled each other during the distribution of garments donated to the settlement, and even grumbled at a huge share of the spoils.

Nora's letters to Mr. Powys, written late at night, sometimes took on a picturesque flippancy under her agile pen. Then she remembered the ardent hopes which flashed from his beautiful eyes, and tore up what she had written.

But contrary to his theories, Nora was sure that the poor had their snatches of enjoyment. Only the settlement workers appeared to abstain entirely from pleasure. The five older women, who during the summer divided their time between the city house and a camp in the mountains, were so tired that they were unable to respond to Mrs. Chambers's conventional ideas of dinner conversation. With all this propaganda about the starving in Europe, their chief worry now was the possibility that philanthropists would neglect the settlement. Mrs. Chambers listened with a chilly aloofness.

After a tour of Fifth Avenue on her last day in New York, Nora, in the home-going crowd of workers in the trolley, pondered once more over the whole question of riches and poverty. Some of the poor she had lived

among were honorable and attractive. Others were not. It seemed to her it would be easier to be good, if one had money. But here she knew she was in unfamiliar country.

Nora experienced an unexpected pity when she said good-bye to her fellow workers. Their courage in facing the problem of human misery was greater than hers. Miss Burton and Miss Graham looked more exhausted every day. Somehow they reminded her of Cordelia. The same unflagging devotion to duty. The same sphere. She had expected that here in a great city, so close to the beating of titanic forces, one became part of the bigness of the world. But the borders of the settlement stretched no farther than the parish of Saint Margaret's or the peaceful groves of Petersfield. Where did one find the strong winds of reality, the great principles of a universal structure? One went on eagerly in youth, more slowly in age, to find them, and they were always somewhere else.

Nora was only one of a long succession of college girls who had dreamed of social service as her contribution to the regeneration of the world. A few weeks brought disillusionment, and one had to try something else.

CHAPTER III

I

Nora began her last year at college by signing up for two of Professor Steele's stiffest history courses, her programme bolstered up further by an advanced economics course. Mr. Powys still brought the elated glow of poetry into a sordid world, but Nora suspected his lack of the solid ballast of fact. She decided to drop sociology.

Ellen Standish had spent the summer trying to convert her father to her theories concerning factory management. She had secured a rest-room for the women workers, but before her other reforms he remained adamant. She carried the record of her failure to Mr. Powys. He, too, had a cotton manufacturer for a parent, with the same inability to see the light. A comparison of fathers made delightful conversation. Ellen soon developed so proprietary an attitude toward Mr. Powys that Nora could no longer decently have a share of him. Ellen followed him about, called him Michael in confidential asides, and was hopelessly in love, as Nora and other members of the Socialist League could plainly see. All of her former independent spirit was gone.

Mr. Powys was not immediately responsive. During these weeks of unrestricted submarine warfare, he was

making feverish trips to New York almost daily, conferring with unseen powers, and giving Petersfield meagre crumbs of his time and careless lectures, which alienated the serious students. Through it all, Ellen boasted that no man was so willing a martyr to ideas as Michael Powys.

He departed early in December on a ship dedicated to peace, its passengers embarking for Europe over a mine-strewn sea with the immediate intention of ending the war. Just how their project was to be accomplished was not explained in detail. Ellen was sure that with Michael Powys on board the peace ship would do something. Miss Steele was reported to have remarked that she never expected to see the return of her dove of peace. Mr. Powys had escaped the British army once, but they would surely get him this time. She viewed the peace ship as another Children's Crusade, equally pitiful and ineffectual.

On the subject of Pacifism, the Socialist League finally split. Ellen and her converts went their way. The others were now attacking the college curriculum in stormy sessions in a dusty room in the library tower.

The dissatisfaction with the present régime had started the previous spring. Nora Deming and Mary Howe refused to take part in the annual May fête. They would not even sit in the audience dressed as Elizabethan ladies or gallants.

Mary Howe was once more repeating the objections she had expressed then. 'I'm tired of all this play-stuff.

I've done it for three years. I've celebrated Christmas, Easter, and May Day quaintly until I'm bored stiff. All the silly plays — every one of them silly — the elaborate costumes, the rehearsals.'

'You have said a mouthful,' her audience applauded.

Mary went on. 'All this college tradition —— All freshman year I was lugged out rainy mornings to sing songs. I stood in snow banks singing songs, and in the boiling sun commencement week. I can't sing. I don't want to try. And the tree-plantings, the flower-fêtes, the water-fêtes, the snow-fêtes. What's it all for?'

'To keep little freshmen from getting homesick.'

'To make us love dear old Petersfield.'

'To make us come back as alumnæ and sing the same old songs fifty years from now.'

'I want to be let alone,' concluded Mary. 'I'm a woman. At least I ought to be. My mother had me when she was my age.'

The remnant of the socialists proceeded, after the destruction of college sentiment, to reform the entire institution. The regeneration of the world was temporarily suspended.

'Two years wasted on required algebra and science,' one member began.

'Why don't they relate science to life? Botany — mostly deep-sea ferns. And chemistry — I never saw the good of it. There isn't a course in food chemistry. Now biology — a good stiff course in physiology ought to be required. I think I know where my stomach is.

Midnight feeds taught me that much. But I'm vague about the rest.'

A courageous member blinked a little, and then plunged into a problem which she felt it her duty to lay before her friends. 'Take marriage, for example. I'll swear half the girls in this college don't know what it means. I found out last year. And yet most of us ——'

An eloquent pause emphasized the truth of her words. The socialists, overcome by reticence and ignorance, tried to look blusteringly experienced, and failed.

'We ought to have lectures with charts,' persisted the courageous member. 'They tried it at Wendover last year, and two girls fell into a dead faint. It's disgusting — humiliating.'

Nora shifted to safer ground. 'We're treated like children. The faculty is afraid to speak out. You remember how Miss Norris discussed Byron's amorous affairs and Shelley's. As if we were schoolgirls. Why mention them at all if they're scared? It was the same way with George Eliot in the novel course. We don't even study Swinburne.'

'Or Nietzsche. In philosophy they're so afraid we'll lose our religion they never get over apologizing for the Rationalists. The way we slide over those gentlemen ——'

'In men's colleges it isn't that way,' explained the sister of a Harvard undergraduate.

'Oh, men!'

'Women's colleges are all wrong.'

'Coeducation is too distracting. I went to a mixed high school.'

'If we only saw men oftener. I don't mean at dances. To discuss problems. If socialist leagues in all the Eastern colleges met three or four times a year ——'

'You speak of the Millennium, my dear.'

The general conclusions of all such sessions were identical. Petersfield, artificially detached from the currents and floods of real existence, offered a false security which was no preparation for life. Life — life — how that word echoed in all college talk. But how was a reform to be reached? The trustees and the faculty, at least so far as they could determine, venerated the unchanged institutions of almost fifty years. Revolution was hopeless.

II

For seniors the immediate problem was to begin thinking about earning a living. With social service as a career dismissed, there seemed nothing for Nora but teaching. If she could be paid to study history year after year, not in Petersfield, but in a big stirring place like New York —— But such jobs did not seem to exist in the files of the college employment bureau.

Nora woke up at night in a torment of perplexity. This question of a future brought back all the ferment of her freshman year. The delights of youth — she had long ago discovered the falsity of the common senti-

mental attitude — she could never be as wretched as she was now.

Is a person waiting for a train happy? Youth is like that. No security. Hopes of something better beyond. All the nervous tension of anticipation is the daily portion of the young. They use their studies, sports, dramatics, like narcotics, to dull these sharp pains. But it is life they want, an undefinable experience, all the more tempting because of its vagueness.

Nora had begun to sign application blanks for teaching jobs and to write careful letters to prospective employers. But she could force no spirit into these deadly preparations for the future.

She was listening carelessly one day to a lecture on Henry James, for whom she had once experienced a temporary enthusiasm. Professor Whitson had observed that his novels showed the writer's tragic detachment from life.

'In studying his biography, one is reminded of a person outside looking through a window at men and women in a brightly lighted room,' the lecturer continued.

In a flash Nora saw that at Petersfield there was for her not even a view through a window. Her fellow socialists denounced their college for failing to equip them for the world they now aspired to conquer. Their airy arguments revolved in her troubled mind and stayed there. She had spent almost four years in digging through subterranean passages which in the end brought

her no promise of light. The money her father had left for her education was almost gone. What had all her labor brought her?

In the meantime, there was the history essay contest which Nora had entered. The prize of two hundred dollars was one of the few tangible rewards of scholarship at Petersfield. Miss Steele had so organized the requirements that the winner was generally recognized as the honor student of her year. Nora's subject, chosen after much trouble, was 'British Empire Building.' Those entering the contest had been assigned a quiet alcove in the library, where they could read without interruption. At one of the long tables Nora worked beside Amelia Donaldson, driven into excessive study by a spinal curvature and restless mental energy. Amelia was always there before Nora; her short-sighted eyes close to her books never turned in her neighbor's direction. She permitted only the interruption of meals, wrinkled her forehead at the scraping back of the chair next to hers. She was writing an essay on the 'African Slave Trade.'

Through the January blizzards, while the Verdun guns were crowding the headlines of every daily paper, the two contestants went through one document after another. By Easter vacation Nora had exhausted all the material on her subject in the college library, as well as a disorderly heap of Mr. Powys's tracts left behind for the Socialist League. During Easter vacation, to be spent visiting Mary Howe in New York, she planned to use the public library.

III

Mary lived in an ugly but comfortable brown-stone front off lower Fifth Avenue. Her father, a rare specimen of American, had no definite employment except that of enjoying himself. Her mother was kept occupied in the nursery most of the day.

On the very first morning of her visit Nora started out in search of the library. Mary was sleeping upstairs.

'You're beginning rather early,' Mary's father suggested, as he politely accompanied his daughter's guest to the front door.

At five o'clock Mary was waiting beside one of the lions at the entrance to the library to conduct Nora to Greenwich Village.

'Daddy and mother are dining out for a night or two,' she said. 'We must make the best of this chance.'

The Dragon was Mary's choice that evening. A green beast with an elongated jaw decorated the outside door and the interior, and a green color scheme emphasized the complexion of the presiding deity. Waitresses in shepherdess costume, possibly the dragon's victims, were exchanging pleasantries with a tableful of young men when the two girls entered.

'Now you mustn't act stiff, or you'll spoil all the fun,' warned Mary, not explaining further what the fun was.

They sat down at the end of the room, with a full view of their neighbors. Middle-aged women in outward ap-

pearance as sensible as the Petersfield faculty formed a goodly proportion.

'We've come too early,' Mary sighed. 'It ought to be more exciting than this.'

Soon a dark young man accompanied by a woman not very young, with a drooping hat, dangling earrings, and a large jade ring on her first finger, sat down at their table. Mary nudged Nora. The young man, simultaneously with a careful study of the menu, draped his arm over his companion's shoulders. Her hand reached out coyly to meet one of his. They began to talk in unsuppressed tones, Mary keeping up a battery of nudges at the most momentous stages in their conversation. The woman, an eavesdropper gathered, was describing a condition resembling intoxication which she had experienced at a Village dance the night before. She had then performed courageous and unexpected feats, now chronicled with some pride. When the young man's soup arrived, he dropped the hand he had been holding. He was very hungry. During the wait for the next course, he became fond once more. Throughout the meal he followed the same alternation of satisfying love and an appetite. Nothing was allowed to interfere with his enjoyment of his dinner, which his companion paid for.

'You see,' Mary announced proudly, like a Greek chorus. 'That's the way it's done.'

Soon the crowd shifted. At near-by tables young girls, like them dining alone, were every moment being

approached by Villagers in broad-brimmed hats, flowing ties, and incipient beards. Mary sat in a feverish glow of anticipation. At last one hovered near their table, measured the icy glint in Nora's eyes, and retired.

Mary turned upon her friend. 'You'll never get experience that way.'

'Experience —— Is this experience?'

'Of course. You're driving them off. Look this way.' Mary assumed a come-hither expression which sent Nora off into wild giggles. 'Well — I ——' Mary sputtered helplessly. Then she opened her bag, brought out a box of cigarettes, and passed them to Nora. Nora shook her head. Mary lit one. It went out. She tried once more, coughed, and then succeeded in puffing out a thin column of smoke. A table of boys next to them, not very different from the Prom crowd at Petersfield, watched Mary, and then in pantomime reproduced her struggles. Soon their table was in an uproar. But Mary, occupied with an uneasy cigarette, held primly in the exact centre of her mouth, smoked on, the wild young men keeping away, in spite of her designedly shameless conduct.

For a second venture, Mary arranged to meet Eddie Gaston at his favorite Italian restaurant south of the Square. She had made his acquaintance in Maine the preceding summer, and to him she owed some of her most inspiring ideas. A tall youth with a mop of curls, similar to the ambrosial locks placed on most statues of Jove by enterprising sculptors, leaned against the door-

way of a stuffy little place opening into a street full of explosive children, lean cats, and a strong smell of garlic. He looked like a poet. There was a battered beauty in his ashen face. His brown eyes had the soft melancholy usually associated with an interest in rhythm. Best of all, he talked like a poet. At least like Nora's conception of one. His swift wonderful sentences were full of words she had hitherto confronted only in her researches in Roget's Thesaurus and some contemporary æsthetic criticism lent her by Mary as a preparation for meeting Eddie.

In the flow of these exquisite sentences Mary was giving a cibarious concentration to the greasy menu card. 'Yes, they've got ravioli. And chicken and spumoni. Order the same, Nora. They're all wonderful.'

Nora was following the elaborate processes of Mr. Gaston. He had first extracted from his vest pocket a leather tube, which he snapped open, revealing an amber cigarette holder reposing on a red satin pillow. He then produced an elaborately designed cigarette case; and when his cigarette was fitted neatly into its amber cap and lighted, he was free to transfer his attention to the wine list. He politely consulted the tastes of his companions. Nora's ignorance drove her to prohibition. Mary ordered *vin ordinaire*. A graceful sweep of Mr. Gaston's arm brought the waiter, a very tall and blond Italian, who belied the popular conception of his race. 'A bottle of *vin ordinaire* and a Martini cocktail.'

The cigarette in its holder Mr. Gaston gave an impressive flourish.

At the conclusion of his cocktail, the poet began to question his guests about poetry. He hoped they didn't like Rupert Brooke.

'We're all reading him,' Nora admitted. 'We love him.'

'War sentiment,' Eddie pronounced. 'Gibson is better. His realism — at least there's some not bad observation at times. But Brooke —— Of course, all the war poets!' Again Eddie's cigarette spun a reënforcing curvet. 'My god is Dowson. Ernest Dowson.' Eddie tipped up his glass. He was now drinking some of Mary's *vin ordinaire*.

'I like Housman better,' Nora said.

'Oh!' Eddie commented, his exclamation rising and falling in a variation of polite disdain. Eddie, Nora suspected, always deliberately chose a poet of his own. 'But Davies is a rare spirit, a wilder singer.'

Mr. Gaston ordered a whiskey-and-soda. He next fingered a small glass holding an emerald-green fluid. He held it up to the light, twisting and turning it, until it shot out rays, and then drank it in lingering, voluptuous sips.

'"That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,"' murmured Mr. Gaston.

This last teratological touch was too much for Nora, fed on historical documents and crammed daily with the horrors of a contemporary sphere.

'I'm afraid even drinking won't do that,' she said with schoolgirl bluntness.

But Mr. Gaston had now ordered a large cigar, which he was trimming with a very new shiny cigar-cutter.

'Oh,' protested Mary. 'I wanted you to recite some of your own poetry, Eddie.'

Eddie's delicate features, before the columnar substantiality of the cigar, had the wraith-like evanescence of the spirals of smoke gambolling over his curls. He faded away into complete silence. Mary was describing the horrors of her mother's parties. Both girls were suddenly conscious of Eddie's unresponsiveness.

'I'm afraid we're boring you, Eddie,' Mary said.

Eddie was very pale. Every moment he was paler. He became a sickly green. He was staring in front of him, one hand clutching an empty wine glass. He made a valiant effort to be polite. 'No — I — I'm not bored. I'm only drunk.' He rubbed his hand over his head, then half rose. 'If — if you'll excuse me,' he said hurriedly.

Mary's monologue had come to an abrupt stop. Her eyes had the round, questioning gaze of wonder. Eddie got out of his chair and fled.

'I'm going to leave this minute,' Nora announced.

'No, you can't. He's ill, poor boy. We'll have to wait until he feels able to go home. Maybe' — Mary's face shone with excitement — 'we'll have to go home with him.'

'I won't.'

'He may be in such a state he can't go alone.' Mary suggested hopefully.

'I won't go.'

'You wouldn't desert a poor young man that drank a little too much. He gets so intense writing poetry. He's just like ashes. I saw him that way in Maine. Then afterward ——'

'He gets drunk, I suppose.'

'Poets have always led very irregular lives. You know that, Nora.'

'He's disgusting.'

'You wait until he recites some of his verse. It's wonderful. You'll forget everything.'

Mr. Gaston's return cut off any further argument. He sat down heavily. When his glance fell upon his half-smoked cigar, he turned green all over again. Hurriedly he summoned the waiter for a whiskey-and-soda. Nora flashed signals to Mary, who tried to keep her attention safely directed elsewhere. Nora's chair dug at her back. Her head ached. She had been shut up in this vile place hours — hours with the tormenting length of weeks, years. Some Italians at the next table had started a shouting din of song. A man near the window was trying to quarrel with the waiter. Eddie Gaston continued to stare in front of him. In another moment, if he didn't make a second hasty flight, Nora knew he was going to be sick. A low groan. Nora now felt a dizzy swell overtaking her. The remnants of

Eddie's cigar sent up sickening fumes. She couldn't stand it any longer. She lifted her limp body out of her chair. Mary pulled her back with a jerk.

'More whiskey,' Eddie demanded.

'He needs it to set him up,' Mary whispered. 'Nora, if you ——'

Mary heroically started a cheerful monologue, Nora staring at Eddie opposite her, surely now in the lowest depths of sickness. But the whiskey gave him a sudden reviving spurt. He straightened up in his chair, patted his curls, turned his head cautiously. Mary seized the favorable moment to nod to Nora that Eddie was, for the time being, restored.

'Well,' Mary remarked tactfully, 'perhaps we might be going.'

Eddie's attention was directed to a cigarette still clasped by its amber holder. He reached for it, gathered together all his scattered powers, and, after an uncertain fumble or two, abstracted the one from the other, got the holder back into its case and into the correct pocket.

'Well,' sighed Eddie with the satisfaction of a real conquest.

The waiter cut short the beginning of a feeble argument as Mr. Gaston was paying the bill. He got the young ladies and the poor young gentleman into their coats and conducted them to the door. Mary hailed a taxi-cab mercifully pausing at the corner and gave a strange address. During the short ride, Mr. Gaston be-

gan to recite the sonnet which had come to him only that morning. Yes, he was sure it was that morning.

No murmur from beyond the iron gate
That guards the world of deeds steals here, no rue
For burning words or anger's bitter brew:
We are immune from sorrow, now, and hate.
Let cool winds find my throat insatiate;
Let glaucous hollows gleam as the retinue
Of pale gold sunrise-clarions sound elate;
Let keen blue swords of beauty cleave me through!

So calm comes dropping slowly down, and sorrows,
Desires unsated, melt like fevered dreams
From days untroubled and unstirred tomorrows:
In one dissolved wave of peace there streams
Our mingled effluence; and, clinging girdless,
We greet the dripping dawn with lips drowned wordless.

He went on and on. The search for beauty, the futility of wasted youth, the bitter bitterness of love — one felt all this in the succession of verses which poured from his lips.

When the taxi stopped at Mr. Gaston's door, he turned to Nora. 'I'm going to begin life on a higher plane,' he told her, 'a higher plane. I'll begin to-morrow. A poet — his sacred duties — his ——'

'I think he'd better,' Nora agreed, as she watched him climb the front steps, clinging to the rail. 'He can't begin any too soon.'

'I hope he gets upstairs to his room safely,' said Mary. 'He's very poor. He lives by writing — articles for the papers — book criticisms and a poetry column. It's killing for a poet — that kind of drudgery.'

'He ought not drink up his money.'

'He's a real genius. The only one I've ever known. But mother won't let him come to the house. He came once when ——'

'I don't believe I appreciate genius.'

'No, you don't, Nora. Here you had a great chance to — to ——'

But Nora never saw Eddie Gaston again. And what is more significant, never heard of him again. Mary Howe's experiences went that way.

IV

The morning after the May baskets had been hung on the doors of faculty and class officers with the singing of appropriate Elizabethan melodies, Nora was summoned to Professor Steele's office.

Miss Steele placed a chair for Nora in front of her desk. 'Miss Deming, the committee has read your essay. It puzzled me, as well as the others, that a young girl in the midst of this present emotional crisis should be — so — so detached.'

Nora tried to evade Miss Steele's direct glance. 'I — I can't help it,' she faltered. 'I've always been detached.' She swallowed hard. 'I — maybe it's because — after my father and mother died — I felt detached. Cordelia — the friend who brought me up — she's very good. But she's detached, too.'

Miss Steele looked down quickly toward the papers on her desk. 'I wasn't criticizing you,' she said. 'I

meant to give you high praise. The committee awarded you the prize unanimously. It is excellent work. Remarkable for an undergraduate.' Miss Steele cleared her throat. 'It made me decide —— We want you in our department next year as an instructor. It will mean some drudgery at first, years of study, and then ——'

'But I — I'm not good enough.'

Miss Steele rose and went over toward the window. 'You are interested in modern history, aren't you? And in its foundations? I've followed your work the last two years carefully. Except for a temporary aberration in sociology' — Miss Steele's face twisted into a reluctant smile — 'you have been the only student with no bias — no hasty conclusions. Of course it means you are an historian.'

'I — I don't know.'

'But you mustn't go into it — into historical study — with the idea that —— it is hard to tell you.' Miss Steele seemed to be tortured with the duty of a shamed confession. 'I must warn you — before you decide — you mustn't make my fatal error. Since the war began — they — my colleagues saw the change — that I —— But I couldn't explain. For years I had been embracing a fatal delusion.'

'You thought there wouldn't be any more wars.' Nora leaped to the truth without waiting for Miss Steele.

'Exactly.' The older woman's voice was dry and hard. 'It has been the folly of my generation to take

evolution too seriously. Unconsciously I applied it to history. As I studied the past, I saw the world passing through various evolutionary stages — that slowly — then — perhaps in my time war would go — and then ——'

'But Greece and Rome — and Japan.'

'Yes, I forgot them. I was a student of modern Europe. I didn't go far enough back. And I limited myself more and more to that patch of western Europe which for me had become the world. I forgot the Balkans and Russia and Turkey. Of course it was all childishness.'

Yes, Nora could understand now why they thought her essay was detached. She hadn't forgotten certain things. But it was remembering — not having delusions — which made one feel so alone sometimes.

'So you must have no hopes, my child. It's my duty to warn you. The world will go on making the same errors. Not even different errors. We record the same stupid folly. Our function is to record — to interpret. But if you start out — not a dupe — the sweep of the past, the glimpse of the present — watching it — like a spectator at a play ——'

'But I ——' From these chilly heights Nora in the warm ardor of her youth shrank back afraid.

'Will you join us? I'm beginning to — please don't think me foolish — the war — I'm not young any more. I feel so tired. I want some one young to start where I left off. You' — Miss Steele reached for Nora's hand

and gave it a stiff, embarrassed jerk — 'Nora, I want you to go on with my work. There is no one else here I trust. I ——'

Nora's eyes, from whose burning directness her contemporaries looked away sometimes, were lifted to Miss Steele's face, a hard, furrowed face which had attempted to build up fortifications for a too sensitive and timid spirit. Miss Steele, so aloof on her lecturer's platform, so self-sufficient in her study, producing scholarly works, Nora had admired. But this weary old woman reaching out for the sturdy support of some one young, she loved.

'I — I'll do what I can,' Nora heard herself saying in a clear, ringing voice. 'If you want me, I'll come.'

Hurrying across the campus, with the spring breeze spreading out her muslin dress like a cloud, she had the swift upliftment of a young immortal entrusted with an urgent message for a stupid world. She passed Faculty House, where three deliberate, stiff-gaited professors were walking back and forth involved in a discussion of some infinitesimal college business evidently carried away from a committee meeting. Their academic tones, which years of the process of delivering authoritative information produce, swept Nora down to the baffling indecisions of the mortal plane. In an instant of rash folly she had dedicated herself to a future represented by the women she saw before her.

She turned and fled from the campus. To the east a path led to open country, with fruit trees in their pale green fringing the hillside. Up toward the hilltop she

ran, breathless and terrified. What had she done? Why? She didn't want any more of Petersfield. She must escape — go far away. As she looked behind her, the regular ranks of red-brick buildings were like prison walls, waiting to enclose her, to keep the fresh air away from her, rob her of youth and hope. No, she wouldn't. She would tell Miss Steele she had changed her mind. She wanted to do something else — something big and free. But what? Against this wall Nora's wild spirit beat. She reached the hilltop and threw herself down in the grass under a sprightly apple tree flaunting the luxuriance of its prime.

In the college paper the winner of the history essay was announced as Nora Deming, class of '16, of Maronac Harbor, Wisconsin, who had been appointed to an instructorship in history. This official bulletin of campus news, every year close to its last gasp of an existence bounded by college seasons, was crowded with interesting items. Below Nora's honor was spread out the array of college engagements. The class of '16 displayed a roster of unusual length. Among the names was that of Eleanor Porter, engaged to Fuzzy's brother, athletic like Fuzzy, and so solidly established in his father's automobile business that they could be married at once. Petersfield had also disposed of Eleanor's future in less formal fashion than Nora's, but with equal sureness.

On the evening that Nora's honors were published, Mary Howe beat against Nora's door. 'Come to Amelia's room quick. She's carrying on fearfully about

not getting the prize. Almost hysterical, I guess. She wants to see you.'

Amelia sat huddled over her study table, her eyes red and swollen. 'Why did you take it away from me?' she accused Nora. 'You didn't try so hard. And I — I didn't have anything else. You — you with everything.'

Nora stood rigid in front of Amelia, quite untouched by pity. 'How do you know I had anything else?' she demanded. Then, turning away, she closed Amelia's door between them.

Nora marched in the long procession of academically gowned seniors to receive her diploma. She was a B.A. from Petersfield, who shook hands with Prexy and received the congratulations of the faculty. Her next act was to superintend the moving of her battered furniture to the wing of Faculty House occupied by the young instructors, known among themselves as 'scrub faculty.' She stood in the barren room for a moment. This, then, was life, of which her Socialist League had so feelingly spoken. So extravagant a waste of words over so little.

V

In Maronac, Nora found that the war had already laid its insidious touch upon the long-established peace of the American and German settlement. Once more the river formed an impassable boundary. The Germans on the south side of town, who sent money to their starving relatives abroad, were bewildered by the strange

tales circulated against their birthplace. Their sympathies soon became the subject of much bitter talk on the north side. They were traitors, aliens, ungrateful for all the United States had given them. Father Stokesbury had been in a training camp the last time he wrote to Cordelia. Britain needed more soldiers. He might be in the trenches by this time. To Cordelia the war was now a holy cause.

But Cordelia still continued her Sunday visits to Della. She and Mrs. Schuster had domestic battles to settle. Della's mother was pushing her old-maid daughter into a marriage with a widower, the father of three children.

'It's all Della hears,' scolded Cordelia. 'He's a good enough man, but he's twenty years older. I know he is.'

'My Della's bein' courted by a goot German man,' Mrs. Schuster announced to Nora on her first visit. 'A fine fella.' She wore the cheerful expression of triumph which confirmed Cordelia's worst fears.

'But who will take care of the garden if Della leaves you?' teased Nora.

'I'll have some goot grass. All them flowers — they're no use to me.'

'But living all alone ——'

Mrs. Schuster only grinned. 'I'll keep the parrot. He's a goot boy.'

The parrot shrieked back, 'Della old maid — old maid.'

'Silly boy,' Mrs. Schuster said. 'Silly boy.'

By the end of the summer Della was married in Saint Margaret's, her three stolid step-children in the front pew with Mrs. Schuster staring solemnly at the bride in a long veil and all the conventional habiliments of a wedding ceremony. In the pew with Cordelia and Nora sat Amy Henderson, taking an hour off from Weyhausen's to see her old fellow worker on the Altar Guild married. If Amy had bitter memories as she looked at Della's bridal array, they were hidden by the elegance of a blue crêpe dress which gave her the vivid pink freshness of her girlhood. A salary of twenty-five dollars a week, an unprecedented sum for a woman to earn in Maronac, may have helped her to forget. Old Mr. Weyhausen recognized real capability. Lizzie Guildford occupied her usual place with the same elegant superiority, never looking in the direction of her neighbor. Except for her studied hostility, one would think she had entirely forgotten the tragedy which joined her to Cordelia. Father Stokesbury's successor, a timid little Cockney hurriedly produced by the Bishop, mumbled the service at galloping speed, and soon the wedding guests were leaving the church.

At the next wedding in Saint Margaret's Nora was one of Eleanor's bridesmaids. Mrs. Porter after much trouble had persuaded the Bishop to read the service. He was very feeble, and his voice broke several times.

Nora found Cordelia stretched out in the Bishop's chair when she returned from the wedding breakfast.

'I hope I won't be going to another wedding for a long time.'

Cordelia looked up. 'Yes — two this summer. But Mrs. Porter is so relieved. There was no one for Eleanor here.' She turned away from Nora. 'There's no young man that you ——'

'No,' Nora answered sternly.

'You think you'll like to — to — stay on there where it's mostly women.'

'I've got my work to do,' Nora reminded her.

'Yes, work — it helps. But ——' Cordelia's fingers fluttered over a letter on the library table. Nora saw her gather it up, and conceal it under her white apron. 'I heard this morning — from Father Stokesbury. He's in France close to the front — any time ——'

Nora shrank from the revelation in Cordelia's face. 'It can't touch him,' she said. The memory of her girlish dreams made a swift tug at her heart. 'Any one so — so alive. He can't die.'

Cordelia had stumbled toward the hall door, and was gone.

CHAPTER IV

I

In late September a mob of freshman girls surged into the history amphitheatre where Professor Steele every year delivered the two general lectures which introduced first-year students to a prescribed diet of 'history survey.' Nora, sitting in the front row with the other members of the department, experienced a fresh stab of panic as each new group passed through the swinging doors. Out of this mass she was to build her future.

The first lecture was a dramatic and brilliant description of Rome before the barbarian invasions. In rapid summary Miss Steele presented the elements of its power, its political organization (which embraced a territory curiously similar, Nora observed, to the present possessions of the Allied armies, now that Russia was falling away), the amenities of life, the heights of culture reached by its citizens with their triumphs in architecture, sculpture, and literature. She then descended to the weakness of this apparently invincible empire; held together by no actual unity, dependent upon mercenary armies, forbidding political discussion, enjoying luxuries bought with slavery and the misery of the common people, sinking into a general intellectual decadence, indifferent to science, indulging in the vain shows of gladiatorial combats. A comparison of this ancient

decay, concerning which none of the freshmen, with the bloom of health and home still upon them, seemed to be greatly excited, might have been made with Rome's modern successor. But Miss Steele's audience, not yet inured to the fatigue of hour-lectures, were beginning to look toward the clock.

On the following day Professor Steele devoted her time to a description of the modern states of Europe as they were before the barbarian invasions. West of the Rhine dwelt 'Chaos and old Night.' Italy, France, Spain, and England, even beyond Hadrian's Wall, all possessed some of the culture emanating from Rome. Then the barbarians came. At the name of the Huns, so recently revived in popular memory, even the most indifferent of the note-takers lifted an inquiring head. Greece had fallen before Rome, Rome before the Vandals and the Huns. Miss Steele went no farther. If the painful building of a new civilization were to go the same way, the autumn of 1916 had not yet made clear.

The bell rang, the freshmen scrambled toward the door, breaking the silence with the scraping of chairs and the clatter of released tongues. The Roman schoolboy, informed of the approach of wild tribes from the North, was probably equally indifferent to the great catastrophe. Petersfield freshmen, involved in the intricacies of a crowded book-store and new subjects, and suffering general geographical bewilderment in strange scenes, had no time to contemplate the future of Europe.

After the two lectures, Nora was assigned her portion

of the history flock. Professor Steele, who had no theories about coddling the apprentices in her department, stated that freshman history, making a general survey of the foundations of the modern world, was a liberal education for her young instructors, and she gave them four sections.

Twenty-five or thirty untamed girls tumbling into a classroom appeared to Nora not as human beings differing little from herself only four years ago, but as fillers of chairs, with feet that always moved, as rows of staring, sneering eyes in faces fixed in a succession of grimaces at the slightest possible excuse for amusement. Nora heard a high, unnatural voice going on and on by means of some kind of internal machinery she was not conscious of directing. To her surprise these meaningless and jumbled sentences were being taken seriously by the restless throng before her and transcribed into note-books. By the end of the first day she went to bed with pains shooting all over. By morning she collected her jaded powers and crawled through another day.

Across the hall Mr. Powys had gathered a fresh crop of sociological enthusiasts about him and was injecting into them his brand of hope for the world. When Nora reached a painful pause, she heard his voice ringing out with the old vigor she remembered.

Mr. Powys's return was a surprise to all Petersfield. He was a drooping peace dove. His blond hair had a kind of limp dejection which reminded Nora of a young chick rescued from a hearty spring rain. From Mr.

Powys she got no succinct information of the peace ship or its manœuvres. He had done his duty, and now he must have a moment or two to recover before he decided on the next desperate venture. He brightened only when Nora mentioned Ellen Standish.

'Miss Standish has been wonderful — wonderful. So sympathetic. She made me feel that my coming back mattered — that I was really needed here. I couldn't have returned without some such hope.'

Nora finished at last the agony of her first week of teaching, with the blessed interval of Saturday and Sunday for recovery. In the meantime fellow instructors took the burden of their jobs with a nonchalant toleration, conversing light-heartedly at meals, which they consumed with a normal quantity of enjoyment. They at least represented the promise of a brighter future.

In her room all of Saturday Nora sat bent over a table heaped with books dealing with the barbarian invasions. The volumes of Gibbon lay in a pile on the floor beside her. Each fresh tome brought new confusion to the task of reducing these spreading hordes within the confines of two recitations. It was like arranging an animated antheap in some kind of law and order.

Miss Ewing across the hall, a small dark woman from Georgia, with a sallow face which suggested perpetual malaria, frequently interrupted Nora's labors.

'Don't work too hard, my dear,' she warned her daily. 'Take it all comfortable and easy.'

Miss Ewing herself viewed life as a race. She had a

bounding step close to a run which carried her across the campus in a loping trot, precious to undergraduate humor. An intellectual eagerness brought a flush to her dark face, a sparkle to eyes of an otherwise commonplace grey, and drove her to accomplish a phenomenal amount of labor. She was a bacteriologist, with a love for science which gave her the solace of religion, even though it had cut her off from a sheltered life and the conventional marriage sacred to Georgian traditions.

She left her germs one Saturday afternoon to take Nora on a long country walk. She swung off with her characteristic speed, not halting in the ascent of the steepest hills. She darted into blackberry hedges to follow a strange bird and chased after the moths which fluttered in front of her.

When darkness settled upon the two, they stood on the brow of a hill many miles from Petersfield.

'Good evening, Vega, my dear,' Miss Ewing said, looking up toward a blue-white star above them. Then with a fine disregard of the sacredness of the dinner hour in Faculty Hall, she pointed out, as they trudged along, the serpents, dragons, dogs, kitchen utensils, and adventurous human beings in which stars conveniently arrange themselves. Nora went to sleep that night thinking of the Great Square of Pegasus in the northeastern sky.

But on the next morning began a fresh contest with the swift march of events in a history survey course. While the freshmen still followed the last straggling bar-

barian invader, their teacher was a lap ahead in the tangles of Christianity. In the distance of two or possibly three days loomed the great figure of Charlemagne and a powerful Papacy.

Nora, in a dash from her classroom to the library to anticipate other cub history instructors using the same books, collided one day with Professor Steele, who was writing another book and therefore gathering material with the greed of a squirrel carrying away nuts to his hole. The head of the department looked very cross at her newest instructor. The undergraduates had learned to give Professor Steele plenty of space in her blind plunges from her study to the library, and her classroom. She counted on their indulgence.

'Well, Miss Deming,' she snorted, straightening her hat.

Since her interview with Nora the preceding spring, she had given her neither advice nor assistance. In choosing Nora Deming, she had paid her the compliment of standing above the need of either.

But if Miss Steele had measured the despairing uncertainty of the shy young person who hurried away from her, she might have spared a minute from her documents. After the sureness of her powers a few months earlier, Nora had descended to a pitiful and feverish questioning of her ability to transcribe what she knew no the slippery surface of the freshman mind. After a glowing account of the salvation of learning by the Christian Church — and Nora was always glowing

when she presented her latest mental conquest — a shaking hand had risen before her half-conscious gaze. 'But isn't this the Dark Ages we're studying?'

It was Molly Abbott, with curly hair and a very charming smile, who had read history virtuously in the library the night before instead of attending freshman sing-song practice, for which act she was fined twenty-five cents. The freshman has a love for anti-climax, for a question which makes her appear to her instructor not as one of the herd, but as an individual.

How is that great chasm between the teacher and the learner to be bridged, especially where the one in authority is new in power and undisciplined in gauging the mental stretches of her victims? What young pedagogue has not started out with great intellectual ambitions, determined to admit no compromise, to make all who should learn burn with a zeal for learning? How does the spark strike fire?

Nora's freshmen shook their heads and looked silly when she asked them searching questions. They complained that she worked them too hard, expected too much outside reading. Some of them cultivated for classroom use a sullen, rebellious expression. And before them, Nora knew, lay the peaks of the Renascence and the Reformation. Nora was now grappling with the Crusades.

As her infant historians tumbled out of the classroom, she pondered over the state of their minds. Were they looking down upon the world with the detachment of an

aviation photographer whose lens reproduced the exact proportions of hills and valleys? Or were they stuck in some morass of detail from which they could not escape without her help? What philosophy of history were they constructing for themselves? And what philosophy had she, herself, harassed by the thought of keeping a lesson or two ahead?

Did she want to go on? Did she like to teach? Sometimes at night, when she was very tired, so tired that she felt sure a few hours of sleep could never bring back the necessary vigor for a new day, she dreamed of an existence better than this fretful haste. Cool, deliberate joy — where did one find it? Reflection in sunny places?

Then she was very lonely. She still had the herd instincts of her undergraduate days, and her instructorship so elevated her above the student plane that even her old associates in the Socialist League examined her with an appraising eye. In her classes she had squeezed the humanity from the frigid young person the freshmen saw. They passed her over in their search for a deity, and found Mr. Powys and Miss Goodwin. All of her faculty contemporaries were as busy as she. Miss Ewing's bacteria made her their slave. There was no companion for a chance interval.

Miss Abington, a next-door neighbor, attracted Nora. She was a shy woman who nodded to the new history instructor when she passed her in the hall, but for weeks went no farther. She looked very unhappy, unlike Miss Ewing, whom science completely satisfied. Miss Abing-

ton, who taught art, wore a green smock, moccasins of dull green suede, and her coils of blond hair were confined by green velvet bands. She was generally followed by her two cats, a huge Maltese and a tortoiseshell, against which the older members of the faculty muttered dangerous threats. But according to rumor Miss Abington possessed a special dispensation signed by the President to keep her pets as a preventive against the nervous depression she suffered from constant association with human beings.

Miss Abington finally invited Nora to tea one rainy Sunday afternoon. In her own rooms her shyness suddenly left her, and she was a delightful hostess. Her sitting-room wall was covered with her own work; portraits of cats principally, but also paintings of flowers, and of gardens full of sunshine, green spaces, flowers seen through tall grasses, with the suggestion of a cat lurking in the shadows.

'Yes,' Miss Abington admitted, as Nora walked soberly around the room, 'my two passions are flowers and cats. First, cats.' To reënforce her words the Maltese stalked out of Miss Abington's bedroom toward Nora.

Nora backed toward the door, an uncomfortable chill passing down her spinal column. 'But I don't like cats,' she had to confess. 'I'd rather be in the room with a tiger.'

'And this is Francis Bacon — a perfect gentleman.' Miss Abington grabbed her pet. 'There. He weighs

twenty pounds. Tremendous. And here is my other child.' The tortoise cat twisted itself over the rug. 'Martin Luther. They have terrific battles. Science and religion. Eternal conflict. I named them first, and the pugnacity developed later.'

Nora now stood against the door, ready to spring out into the hall if either feline made friendly advances. Miss Abington gathered science and religion into the folds of her smock and carried them into her bedroom.

As they drank tea, Miss Abington confessed that the tragedy of life lay for her in the fact that she spent her time talking about painting instead of painting.

'But you have painted a lot.'

'Summers. And very badly. In three months one can do very little. And in this academic atmosphere one sacrifices the emotions to the intellect.'

'But your intelligence doesn't help you to paint?'

'Oh, no. I know too much to be a good painter. So I chatter about art to crowds of girls who will clutter up museums and repeat my twaddle.'

The paintings of cats were beginning to have a delicate bloom of fame in New York galleries. Miss Abington confessed that she kept nineteen cats in her summer studio, none of them handsome, but all 'so delightfully cat-like.' She studied every changing expression with the ceaseless patience of a portrait painter until each animal had an individuality of feature and soul transferred to the canvas. But being a tactful and very kind woman, she kept cats out of her conversations with Nora.

She herself had a similar aversion to moths, marked by an almost morbid sensitiveness to their destruction by frost as the autumn came on. As she passed a street lamp at night with the ghostly creatures still fluttering in steadily decreasing numbers about the light, she whispered to Nora, 'No, I can't stand it. I can't watch them suffer.' Rebellious against the slow methods of hard weather and starvation, she made wild plans of her own for their quick death; but it was difficult to circumvent Nature. 'Even man goes the same slow way,' she admitted. 'But I shall take swift means to end myself. I don't consider it a sin.'

The destruction of mankind in Europe was daily being accomplished by means other than famine and hard weather. Nora was now reading books on the Industrial Revolution. In England greedy squires had encouraged their laborers to have large families for the benefit of the estate. Mill workers viewed a numerous progeny as a means for larger aggregate earnings. High food and low wages fought the old battles. A surplus population spreading over a great empire had not afforded enough relief for the little island groaning under its burden of people. Was Malthus, whom Victorian sentimentalists had resented so violently, right after all, and must the world have these periodic checks of famine, pestilence, and war to keep down the swarming millions?

In the midst of Nora's speculations came the news that the United States had declared war against Germany. The students, who since Nora's time had vacil-

lated between indifference and spasmodic sentiment, became martial overnight. The Socialist League gave up its last feeble flicker of pacifism. Nora's freshmen grew restless and indifferent. In their schoolgirl circle was the prospect now of brothers and friends in officers' training camps. The boys they had danced with at West Point a week ago were now glorified, heroic men. Among the faculty, enthusiasm for the war was somewhat tempered by sober considerations of the thousands of dead in Europe.

Amelia Donaldson was arrested in New York for making anti-draft speeches on the street. The professor of English literature, Miss Hays, had settled Amelia as a teacher in the New York Labor College which she had sponsored from its start. She told every one that Amelia was at last very happy. But with the declaration of war, Amelia saw the students she was giving economics and general culture snatched from her for bayonet practice. There was nothing for her, then, but soapbox oratory.

Petersfield got first-page headlines in the New York papers. Amelia in jail gave defiant interviews to all the reporters. Mr. Powys made a flying trip to New York to furnish bail. He rescued her from martyrdom. Amelia must be reserved for greater struggles.

His action divided campus opinion. The most excitable faculty members wanted a 'dangerous alien' removed. Several of the trustees got stirred up. But Miss Steele put aside her manuscripts for a few days to make

a fight to save him. In action she was a forceful figure, with unexpected strategies in managing the trustees and a barrage of sarcasm to crumple her faculty foes. Miss Hays carried Amelia off to a labor colony for the summer with the hope that the problems of education would keep her from street-corner agitation.

II

By fall Petersfield had stepped in line to help win the war. Both faculty and students in a large room in the science building scraped bandages and prepared other hospital supplies. Red Cross drives consumed most of the undergraduate energy. Miss Goodwin was coaching a play, the proceeds to go to war relief. Every evening the faculty met in the parlor of Faculty House to learn to knit. Women who had previously spent all of their evenings in the laboratory or the library now bent over wooden needles held awkwardly, making clumsy stitches which generally had to come out. Mufflers in a variety of ripples and waves, sweaters too large or too small for the average soldier, socks that remained in the same indefinite stage of completion tumbled from under stiff professorial fingers. At the same time silly girls of eighteen or nineteen were achieving remarkable results in purling and fancy stitches with little effort. Intellectual and manual skill, sadly enough, seldom travel together.

Gradually the custom developed for one of the women to read while the others worked for their country. To

convert the American public to a state of mind demanded by conflicts involving both hemispheres, amazing chronicles were appearing, combining the realism of wholesale destruction with a sentimental patriotic appeal. Soldier-authors, who described in detail the putrefaction of death on the battlefield, the torture of victims in barbed-wire entanglements, the wrecks of men in the hospital beds, also recorded the spiritual elation of war, the hopes of a new world, the glorious philosophy of death. War humor developed a little more slowly. Untainted realism was still far from advisable.

From these readings Miss Steele was notably absent. She gathered all war books into her phrase 'garbage,' declared she did not know how to knit, and was too busy to learn. Miss Abington stole quietly away from the first knitting meeting enlivened by war literature.

'I can't bear it,' she whispered to Nora with a twisted, tortured smile. 'I must try to think of other things.'

As the winter went on and the faculty staged grim contests in knitting the greatest number of sweaters and socks, needles clicked steadily through faculty meetings, Miss Steele looking on with scornful amusement. Unlike the other professors she did not permit students to knit in her classes. They quoted her as saying that a little information about the past was not amiss in these troubled times, which she refused to complicate further by the mental disease of divided attention. Clearly enough she was not a patriotic woman.

Petersfield girls were giving a large share of their time

to being patriotic. They threw themselves whole-souled into each new drive and fad, were photographed in Red Cross uniform, cracked jests over the novelty of meatless and wheatless days, and made picturesque use of the latest mob developments. When the march of events dragged somewhat, they read war verse. Rupert Brooke had fallen before unworthy rivals truckling in cheap and hysterical emotion. There was much letter-writing, much pride in the possession of the photographs of potential heroes. The trains were crowded with girls going to New York to say good-bye to fathers, brothers, cousins, lovers, leaving for distant camps. Handsome uniformed boys on leave appeared on the campus.

The old life could not go on in the same way. The faculty looked on with a romantic sympathy for young love making holiday, blind to the consequences of lavish permissions granted the undergraduates to spend the day in New York. Not all went there to deliver tearful farewells to lovers embarking for France. Some consoled themselves for want of lovers by a day of change and adventure. They prowled about in strange places, investigated Amelia's laboring classes, and ate at Greenwich Village restaurants, where they cultivated cigarette-smoking. They brought back to the campus an assertiveness which came out in meetings agitating greater undergraduate powers in college government. The bolder spirits broke rules, and their followers in a body supported them and clashed with faculty authority. Miss Steele refused to serve on a committee appointed

to investigate the cause of this new spirit. With her book in full swing she had no time to waste on a committee searching for something under their very noses.

Nora, who had given up her struggles in knitting after the completion of a muffler rejected by the Red Cross, was also watching the rapid appearance of a new order. During her second year of teaching she was less driven by her subject. Her students ceased to be mere receivers of painfully acquired lecture material. They had become individuals, caught up in all the difficulties she had once suffered.

A freshman from the South confessed to Nora, as an excuse for inadequate information about the causes of the French Revolution, that she had stayed up all of the preceding night to argue with her room-mate from Boston.

'There's two things we've got to get settled right away,' she explained — 'God and the Civil War.'

At the moment American soldiers were being killed in the front-line trenches. Miss Ewing was expecting to hear every day that her brother had landed in France.

'The war doesn't touch you,' she reminded Nora. 'You are very fortunate.'

In Miss Ewing's words Nora detected an unconscious superiority. Elevated above the rest of Petersfield were those chosen ones who had relatives on the way to the front. In the parlor of Faculty House women like Miss Ewing of the inner circle of supreme devotion to their country drifted together. Nora, overhearing their talk

of commissions, ports in England and France, the expectation of cablegrams, envied their intimate participation. She had not written to Father Stokesbury, who sent Cordelia letters full of humor from a French village not far from the front. When her students consulted her as an historian about the war, they were surprised to discover her bewilderment.

'But I thought every one knew we were fighting to save Europe,' one young thing commented.

'Save from what?'

But such a question was too much for a mere freshman.

The President in his message to Congress had presented his Fourteen Points. They were read aloud, one by one, in the faculty parlor, during the knitting, each decorated with comment and debate. Miss Ewing, a good Southern Democrat, stood behind her President with a fervor which soon made him in her eyes a saint, the savior of a war-torn world.

'He's the great man of our age,' she affirmed to Nora, 'the great man.'

But the New England Republicans did not agree with Miss Ewing. They were violent in shouting a shrill warning to persons in danger of being duped by sickly idealism.

III

Ellen's engagement to Michael Powys was precipitated into matrimony by Amelia Donaldson's im-

portunate passion for Michael. From the day he had rescued her from prison, Amelia had sent fervent epistles to her deliverer, beginning on the high plane of sociology, but soon declaring deathless love. Then she got ill. At last she threatened suicide. In this crisis Nora was hastily summoned to New York to see Ellen and Michael safely married.

When Nora returned to Petersfield, Cordelia's letter was awaiting her. Father Stokesbury was dead.

Never for a moment had she thought he could be killed — that death could take any one — young, smiling, with a jest for everything. No, it couldn't be.

Father Stokesbury was the only splendid man she had ever known. She could have loved him if —— Why had she let those women keep her away? If he and she —— Racking sobs tore at her throat. He was a stranger. She had never known him. No one in Maronac had pierced the enigmatic aloofness underneath his sparkling exterior. Now it was too late.

If she could have seen him before he left Maronac —— A memory of his face in repose — the strained intensity — the troubled depths —— What bitterness had taught him that persistent raillery — that humor edged with sadness? If she had talked to him — found out if he was sure he was embarking upon a holy mission —— Or was he like her — full of doubt? If a man fought to save the world and his soul, the last moment would bring upliftment. But if he had gone reluctantly — urged on by a duty which society forced upon the young and the

strong —— There was the torment. She would never know.

The damning memory of the war books read in the faculty parlor — the loathsome pictures —— She mustn't — one would go mad thinking of it. If he, like some of them — slow death — not the swift proud end. No, she couldn't think of it.

Why should this man bring to her what her mother — her wasted mother, with a sigh and a smile for her over the last struggling breath — had not brought? The relief to her, that strong childish memory. And this bitterness now.

At the end, if he had known some one loved him — some woman. If one is greatly loved, death is not complete annihilation. The memory in the other heart — a flitting, tenuous visitant in the midst of all the boring duties in the world — even that —— If she had loved him — even if he hadn't known — given him her best —— But she had thrown away her chance. And for what? Even Cordelia had something precious left her.

In the next days Nora tried to bury herself in her historical studies. She found herself again and again staring at her book — not reading a word. She detected Miss Abington and Miss Ewing examining her with furtive, pitying glances. She knew what they were thinking. If it had only been that ——

On the library steps, she met Professor Steele with an armful of books. 'Have you settled on any particular

line of study?' the older woman inquired with her characteristic abruptness.

Nora informed her that she had almost decided to take eighteenth and nineteenth century English history for her province.

'Very good, very good,' murmured Miss Steele, her eyes fixed upon the library door. 'Very inauspicious time. You'll have to wait until after the war to go to England.'

A few days later, Nora received a formal announcement from the committee on scholarships that she had been awarded one for a year of graduate study. She went at once to Miss Steele's office.

'I don't see what I've done to deserve it,' she exclaimed breathlessly.

Miss Steele looked up calmly from a mass of papers she had been examining. 'Good brains are scarce, Miss Deming. You really had very little to compete against.' Then, when she had completed a crisply directed oration about Nora's scholarly plans, she added: 'Very bad time to study. Our universities are demoralized. But I was afraid if you stayed here much longer, you'd begin to think Petersfield was the world. It isn't. Last year your black despair gave me no concern. But this year I'd begun to detect a tendency to be satisfied here — to settle down. A grave symptom in the young.'

Nora saw the mocking smile lurking beneath Miss Steele's solemnity, and smiled too.

When she visited Knickerbocker University in New

York to make plans for her studies there in the fall, she had a moment of terror. Petersfield had not prepared her for the crowded corridors and impersonal machinery of a university. But it was this intellectual stronghold she must try to conquer. She was like a nun, who, after running away from her cloister, looks back with longing to the security there. And yet in the tumult of the streets, with the confusion of traffic and the bright colors of the foreign uniforms which now made New York like a European capital on parade, she experienced what had never come to her in Petersfield. Excitement, novelty, change. Her eyes were blinded with tears as she made her uncertain way to the subway, nearly upsetting the box of a flower-vendor selling clusters of pansies on the sidewalk.

'Flowas — nice flowas,' he invited customers in a soft foreign voice.

She selected a bunch and fastened them on her coat, like a banner to give her courage as she made her first timid excursion out of that sacred grove for maidenhood which Petersfield had been. In the bewildering glare of sunshine, she blinked, hesitated an instant, and then plunged forward with a firm step, her flowers nodding before her.

PART III

Actæon

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Actæon

CHAPTER I

I

Nora, following the sidewalk which pierced Knickerbocker University, passed between rows of buildings uniformly red brick, rising storey above storey, all close duplicates, as if designed from the original plan of an architect inspired to construct the largest number of classrooms and the maximum of windows, sunshine, cross-ventilation, with the smallest consumption of New York ground space. It came down to a genius of economy in utilizing the very precious and rocky fragment of Manhattan Island which the University had gobbled up just in time. Accordingly, Knickerbocker University had anticipated the modern factory in its construction, proving that culture does not always lag behind industry.

But to one fresh from the groves of Petersfield, Knickerbocker was dispiriting. Nora must wait to penetrate its inner life. Hidden springs gushed, overflowed from a source having no connection with this barren exterior. She must be patient.

In the September sunshine the people hurrying past her made her feel cheerful, uplifted. It was they who

mattered. All of them, one guessed from their brisk, business-like air, had something important to do. They were vital people whose existence mattered. The young men — were they students — would they walk daily the same pavements, read in the library — like her? Only the youngest ones. This was war-time: two officers walking together, with the nervous, alert expression she was sure they had cultivated, reminded her. And the last building before she crossed the street, the windows open, boys in olive-drab uniforms sat looking out. The S.A.T.C.; she had forgotten. If the war lasted long enough, they would be soldiers. Without them the University would be deserted — only professors and a few men physically unfit. These youngsters — doing something to them — hasty plans — but universities must be used some way. A crowd of boys in a window high above the street were throwing down wads of paper to make the girls hurrying for the subway look up at them.

Nora crossed the street. A broad business thoroughfare and a tangle of trolley lines separated the dormitory for graduate women and those in the professional schools from the rest of the University. The same old sex division. Men's dormitories on one side, a long row of them, the one for women on the other, obeying the scriptural order, 'male and female created he them.' The women's hall, being an architect's latest dream, was even more gaunt and towering than its prototypes. Its windows in unvarying rows going up and up — one of them hers — all representing some woman huddled

behind each glass pane —— No, she wouldn't live there. One decision, at least, was easily made.

In her bag was a list of neighborhood apartments with rooms rented to students. She would try these. She had a long block of the busy street before she made the initial plunge of the first address. A shoe-shining place with rows of hats in the window, its open door, men coming in and out. All New York men looked smart and well-groomed. Nowhere else was there the same correctness of detail. Here men made an art of middle age, the rough tweeds suggesting the brown of early fall, with the sunshine bringing out bright threads interwoven like autumn leaves, the glossy hats in soft tones, the gleam of freshly polished shoes, the socks in a harmony of dull tones. How stupid the clothes of men were elsewhere! How alive here!

The women passed her unobserved. It was the men she saw. Women — she had watched too many women. She was relieved that she had decided not to live in that stuffy women's hall. Of course it would be stuffy. Places filled with women — only women — always were. All the vitality squeezed out. Respectability and lack of adventure did it.

With her trunk and bags still at the station, Nora had a whole day to look around. No haste — the luxury of it.

In the first apartment house an ebony elevator man, in a new uniform, the collar very stiff and shiny with braid, immediately guessed her errand.

'Room, Miss? Miss Johnson — I guess she's filled up. But Miss Walters — eighth floor — she's got a nice room. Pleasant lady. Take ye up, Miss?'

Miss Walters, dressed in a street costume, opened the door. 'A room. Oh, yes. Just for yourself?'

She swung back a near-by door, presenting a view of a very small dark room, opening upon a narrow court. She went ahead to turn on a rose-shaded lamp. The lamp, with the yellow walls and white wicker furniture, helped to give an impression of light, but at ten o'clock in the morning the room was naturally full of gloom.

'The last roomer stayed four years,' Miss Walters began. 'She loved this room. So girlish, she said. The light furniture and the cretonne ——'

'But I couldn't study in such a room.' Miss Walters was politely non-committal. 'I thought I'd like a place with morning sun.'

'Sun is very hard to get in New York and very expensive.'

Sunshine and fresh air a luxury. A new idea. Then she remembered the settlement neighborhood.

In the next apartment the ominous smell of some disinfectant assailed her. Across the court a woman was drying her hair with a fan. It seemed indecent to live so close to people.

The trained nurse, generally away all day, with a room to rent, conducted Nora into the presence of a young man without a collar, who was pounding a typewriter. 'Don't mind him,' Miss Jones said, observing

Nora's hesitation. 'He's leaving to-day.' The floor was strewn with paper, sheets of it thrown loosely everywhere.

'No. I don't mind being exhibited,' he said, pausing. 'I don't pay my rent promptly, so I have to leave.' He gave Miss Jones a meaning glance.

'He's an author,' Miss Jones murmured confidentially as Nora backed out of the room. 'You didn't let me show you the closets — two of them.'

The rent was ten dollars a week. Of course it was impossible. If the author had been staying and there had been some kind of hole for her to creep into — living in the same apartment with a man who wrote might give her something.

All the decent rooms she saw were beyond what she could pay. 'Haven't you a girl friend who would share the room with you?' chirped prospective landladies. Twilight was coming on, and she had to find a place for the night. There was nothing but the women's dormitory. Nora tottered back on aching feet.

The matron assigned her a room whose unrelieved walls, wash-basin, and concrete floor brought weary tears. Once more she was baffled. Herded with hundreds of women. The same old thing all over again. Would there ever be escape from such a life?

In the cafeteria downstairs the clatter of dishes and the voices spinning in circles and dizzy waves around her choked her as she tried to eat some corned-beef hash and tough buttered beets. Women, tired like her, sat

at bare tables, their hair falling in limp wisps over their faces. Most of them were not young. The sagged resignation in the sallow faces belonged with airless schoolrooms, high-pitched, nervous voices, blackboards, clouds of chalk dust. Why had they come here?

The trolleys, the trucks, the fire-engines clanging up and down as if bent on mad exercise, the milk carts, kept Nora awake most of the night. Toward dawn she slept. When she opened her eyes, the breeze was blowing out the sash curtain, and from her couch she could look down upon miles and miles of streets, full of golden light, all astir with the activity of a new morning.

Nora learned that the professor Miss Steele had advised her to study with was on some war committee in Washington. Two of the others were not to be found in their offices the first time she called. One very bored young man talked to three or four women waiting in the hall, disposing of them efficiently together to save valuable time.

'It's just our money they want,' said one. 'I wonder why I came.'

The professors Nora saw were very polite in a formal, almost scared way, but they did not urge her to take their courses or advise her about the offering of their colleagues. Evidently a graduate school was like the cafeteria. The food was spread out, and you could take what looked good to you. But a cafeteria meal was too often an unbalanced array of dishes snatched at in a crowded line. No proper proportion of protein, carbo-

hydrates, and starches one heard about. Not at all what one wanted. The history courses she registered for were probably not much better.

The lectures the first days were discouraging — all facts. Some were a repetition of Petersfield. No new point of view. Nora took down notes in a mad race with the lecturer; then her pen lagged, and she stared around the room. Most of the students were women. The men were the discards of the draft board, or wore wedding rings, sometimes ostentatiously. As Miss Steele had said, this was an inauspicious time to begin graduate work. The University was apologetic, uneasy. The war might last another year. Professors were dispirited. Those who had tried to get over to France champed fretfully over the drudgery of going on with the old sing-song lectures. Those who felt civilization must be kept going raged in secret over the rows of meek female faces before them.

From many of the classroom windows Nora could watch men drilling on the athletic grounds. The papers were full of alarming news about an epidemic of influenza brought from Europe which was spreading in the training camps. In a few days men from the dormitory across the street were being carried out by attendants with handkerchiefs over nose and mouth. The epidemic had come. Women in Nora's hall were ill. Many were frightened. They were advised to keep outdoors and away from the subways and theatres.

Nora in the airless library began thinking about

germs. The library encouraged low prospects. It was huge, unmanageable, slow. One waited hours for books which, at last, were announced as not in.

At last she found a quiet reading-room; and by degrees she adjusted herself to the University. In the basement of the library was a place where tea was served every afternoon. Women, snatching a little refreshment before they returned to their books, talked to Nora. At a corner table every day sat two young men with the curse of feeble health upon them. At least a kind of transparent unsubstantiality characterized their tense frames. They appeared to be engaged in an argument prolonged from day to day. Nora drank two cups of tea in lingering sips and bought a second piece of currant cake. Tea on a dark, rainy day, the moist, comforting warmth of it going down a throat parched by the dust of the library books. The throat muscles relax. The soreness is gone. The pain behind burning eyeballs pounds less, disappears. One sits in a cosy glow enjoying the third cup.

The cell of a room in the dormitory was slowly taking on familiarity. She liked to wake up in the morning with the sunshine on her face. It was a peaceful place to study. Over the tall buildings rosy clouds came at sunset. She could see Jupiter in the twilight from her window. Jupiter — his 'mild and magnificent eye' — where had she read it? Some poet. Browning. Mars had risen by the time she came up after dinner. By leaning out, she could just see its candle-flame gleam in

the sky. Miss Ewing had taught her the stars and the planets. What splendid women there were at Petersfield!

Her neighbors dropped into her room to talk after dinner, determined to keep the conversation away from influenza. They were less cheerless upon acquaintance, often with lovely smiles and unexpected humor. There was beauty in a few faces, so delicate that it was easily overlooked at first. Mental restlessness was commoner than intelligence, but one found both. They had such amusing reasons for coming to the University. Miss Andrews, from Trenton, New Jersey, was threatened with a nervous breakdown and had to give up teaching for a year. She drank hot milk before going to bed at eight o'clock every night. Most of the others wanted a change. Year after year in the same place. In New York everything happened. They had heard of a graduate student who married one of the professors; in anthropology, they thought. The theatre, the opera, the orchestras — everything in New York. Then one had professional ambitions — a better job. Nora was considered a remarkable person to have taught in a college so young. How was it done? And Petersfield. A college job was more than they could expect. Learning for itself — the pleasure of grappling with tough intellectual problems — they did not talk about that. Wasn't Professor White hard to follow? He was scholarly, but ——

II

Armistice Night. Nora was standing near Times Square in a mob of revellers. Horns tooted. Confetti fell everywhere. It was a wild time. Men and women joined hands and danced in the street. Noisy boys, spreading out in a long line, swept little groups of bystanders into a circle with deafening shouts when their prisoners tried to get away. The police on proud-stepping horses curvetted in and out of the crowd. The war was over. More noise. Clacking toys, whistles. Children got lost and howled. Women fainted in the street. Hawkers sold pancakes, coffee, hot dogs. Peace had come.

'Those with dead — are not here,' Nora's companion said.

In the tumult Nora was thrown against her old Petersfield friend Helen Spring.

'Well, it's over at last,' Helen began. 'Isn't this wonderful? I heard you were in New York. So you're living near the University. You don't like the dormitory? If I'd got hold of you, I'd have begged you to take half of my apartment in the Village. Amelia Donaldson just rented it. Yes, she's still in the Labor College, and awfully excited about it.'

Helen herself was taking up psycho-analysis with a remarkable man. She intended to do startling things to people, mental cases, when she got going. Helen, plump and easy-going, was not the popular conception of a worker in abnormal psychology. She had been one of the milder members of the Socialist League.

'Amelia's as crazy as ever,' Helen chattered on. 'She's a case to begin on. You must come down soon. We'll both want to see you.'

Upon Nora's visit she found Helen's rooms looking out upon a little garden, very charming with their long, low proportions and a wood-burning fireplace. An old-fashioned four-storey house had been converted into a coöperative apartment by some enterprising women who sold each floor to members of their sex engaged in some unusual but approved employment.

'It's a fascinating place to be,' Helen said. 'The most interesting people.'

'Maybe Amelia won't care to see me,' Nora ventured when Helen suggested rapping on the door connecting with Amelia's rooms in front.

'She wants to see you. She said to be sure and call her.' A man's voice could be heard. 'It doesn't matter,' Helen explained. 'He's always there.'

Amelia put on a bubbling show of delight at seeing an old classmate. She was more animated and full of talk than in her college days. Behind her stood a tall, ungainly young man, rather handsome in a swarthy way.

'Only Tony,' Amelia laughed by way of introduction.

Tony took a chair in a remote corner of Amelia's apartment. Its black furniture and deep blue hangings had an intense look like their owner. Nora asked Amelia about the Labor College.

'And you're still studying, Helen tells me,' Amelia

remarked next. 'I've given all that up. There isn't time in my life — at least not now.'

The young man kept his eyes fixed upon Amelia. They had the expression of a faithful dog not always well used.

'Who is Tony?' Nora asked when they were back in Helen's room, seated before a blazing wood fire.

'Amelia will tell you the next time she sees you. She's reclaiming him. He's just out of some school of correction. His gang — they're all in gangs — those Italian boys south of the Square.'

'He doesn't look over eighteen. Is he in love with Amelia?'

'She lets him hang around. He's here by eight o'clock some mornings. He cooks her meals — runs errands — polishes her shoes ——'

'So that's the way she reclaims him?'

'Well, he was stealing automobiles before. At least his friends were. Poor Tony seems too stupid to get away with much himself. Perhaps having a mistress ——'

'You don't mean ——'

'My dear, psycho-analysis makes one suspect the purity of human emotions. I trust no one and nothing. And with an over-sexed woman like Amelia, I'd believe anything.'

'Some one ought to warn him.'

Helen laughed. 'Amelia's up to something. She's no fool, you know. And the poor boy is flattered that an American above him socially ——'

The next time Nora visited Helen there was the man's voice on the other side of the door. Then a terrible sound, like the howling of a dog. A rap on the door, and Amelia asking them to go to a strike meeting with her. It was near by. One of the men from the Labor College was the speaker. Tony did not appear, and the three women walked away together.

The dingy hall rocked with the noise of the crowd. Children ran all over. Babies crawled over the filthy floor or ate sticky messes which got smeared over their faces, even in their hair. The smells. No bathrooms. Nora knew that from the settlement. And the toilets in the dark halls. The oratorical man who took charge of the meeting reminded Nora of the boys who debated in the night-school classes at the settlement. The same glib tongue shooting off eloquence without logic or common sense. The crowd were a flock of sheep taking in everything he said. When he got through, the gabbling tongues threatened a riot. Nora was afraid.

'Is the speaker a garment-worker?' Nora asked Amelia. The strike seemed to be involving garment workers.

'No. He was trained at our school to be a labor-union leader. We need young men who can talk well.'

'I should think they'd prefer one of their own workers to direct them. If I were an electrician or a plumber ——'

'A man from the ranks has no social sense. He doesn't understand industrial organization or capitalistic ex-

ploitation. He's too close to the economic struggle. He can't forget the week's pay check. We must get Vicky Hamilton, organizer of the lady needleworkers, to explain things to you. She belongs to the old Philadelphia Hamilton family. It's very useful to have such a name to use in labor ranks.'

When Amelia went back to her quarters, Nora and Helen heard Tony's voice again.

'You see,' laughed Helen.

'Can't you do something?' Nora's voice was desperate.

'What can I do? It's not my affair. I blame Petersfield for people like Amelia. If she hadn't been bottled up there — brooding for four years — overstimulated mentally — all that feminine atmosphere. I don't believe in college communities. It's the soil where Sapphism flourishes.'

'There wasn't any at Petersfield. I never saw it.' She hesitated. The satyr laughter of the gardener's assistant — a cat twisting its back and purring — 'Well — maybe two cases,' she admitted.

'You were too innocent to suspect.'

'So you question all friendships between women. It's a dangerous point of view.'

'I didn't say all. But too often.'

Helen was looking for mental sickness everywhere. It was the way of psycho-analysts. Freud — exaggerating one theory. Nora had read enough of him to know.

Greenwich Villagers went to meetings, lectures. Their thinking they apparently left to others. Nora was carried off to listen to some new kind of theory nearly every time she came down to sit in front of Helen's fire. Opportunities in New York — they mustn't be neglected. Sticking off at a university with the dead ideas in books — Nora must be rescued from all that.

An Irish poet was addressing the Twentieth Century Club to which Helen belonged. This was better than the thought-control crank last week.

Zoe Ryder was going with them. She was a gentle little woman brought up on a large plantation in Virginia. Her childhood had been very lonely. Her people were land-poor. All her education had come from an ignorant governess and an old-fashioned library. She got up North and took nurse's training to make money in the quickest way. She had great success with mental cases. Helen had met her at one of the clinics.

Zoe had just come off a very bad case. They were trying to cure a young man — it was drink — his mind gone — all kinds of money. She had been shut up alone with him on a country estate with only the servants to call upon. The night nurses had set him off raving crazy, and they had to leave. Only Zoe could manage him. She had a kind of hypnotic influence. But she was so tired. One night he crept out of bed and got away. She followed him in the darkness with a flash-

light. She didn't dare ask for help. It was a hilly country, with marshes not far away. She wasn't afraid of him or the black night — but if he got into the marshes. That was the terror for her. She got him back. He was too weak now to walk far. But the next morning she saw that she must have a rest. Her patient was turned over to a strong man and put into a strait-jacket.

The Irish speaker had beautiful, beseeching brown eyes. He wanted his countrymen to be reasonable. He reviewed Irish history. There had been mistakes on both sides. He wanted to go back to dear beautiful Ireland and find peace. Then the fairies would return, and he could write his verse.

Zoe sat next to Nora. During the talk Nora had felt a hand pulling at her arm, but she wanted to hear what the poet was saying. She was charmed by his mixture of fancy and shrewd common sense.

When he was done, Zoe whispered to her, 'You see — that man over there — the tall dark one.' Nora examined a dignified man filling the opposite corner. 'He's been staring at me the whole evening. I've been so uncomfortable.'

'I didn't notice. He's been looking at the speaker.'

'No, no,' Zoe insisted. 'Let's hurry away. He'll try to speak to me afterward.'

'I suppose Zoe told you about the man staring at her,' Helen remarked when the two were alone. 'She's got persecution mania. Try to start her on something else. Men are always following her on the street. Of course

she wants them to. She's such a quiet little mouse I'm sure no one really notices her. She's tired out.'

'Nursing's too hard for her.'

'And she won't take anything but mental cases. It's the excitement, I guess. She writes charming verse for children. I want you to see it. Full of humor — a kind of twinkle — and the sadness so close to the surface of a child's life. But this other thing — it gets stronger all the time. Maybe if she had a little money and time to write — she might get over it.'

Zoe appeared like a little brown bird chirping on a sunny winter morning. This hallucination was terrible. If Helen with her new ideas could only do something. But Helen insisted that not every one could be saved by psycho-analysis. She was progressing far enough to see that.

Amelia introduced Nora to Vicky Hamilton, organizer of the lady needleworkers, at the Dragon, with its memories of Mary Howe, now in France dancing at the Red Cross parties with young officers. Miss Hamilton had her hair cut short like a boy's, and her handshake was painfully gripping. They continued their discussion of industrial problems in Amelia's room. Tony for once wasn't there.

Vicky crossed one leg over the other, lighted a cigarette, which curvetted around one corner of her mouth as she talked. 'You people up at the University in the dissertation belt,' she began anew, 'you're all theory. There's theoretical sympathy — emotional sometimes.

But that's not enough. You've got to get down here with the crowd and start the machinery going.'

'That's what I've told Nora,' Amelia said.

Vicky, it developed, had domestic problems dragging at her industrial efficiency. 'Mother and brother have come up to New York for the winter. I won't live with them. I told them so. I refuse to have my comings and goings questioned. I must be free — live my own life.'

'Of course,' agreed Amelia.

'You've heard about Bess Leland's baby?' Vicky inquired of Amelia.

'Yes, it's come. A boy. Bess stayed at the office until six. And the baby was born before nine. Easy — no pain. What motherhood should be.'

Bess was secretary for the Birth Control Association. It was wonderful having a courageous woman like Bess down there — helping the cause by showing that women, even with all the knowledge for preventing conception, had babies. But only when they wanted them. Bess was maternal. She needed children. This was her second child. His father was a free-lance writer for a radical weekly. The father of three-year-old Gloria was an actor, once considered by Bess the great luminary of the theatre. Drink had dimmed his light, and he was now in the movies, supported between jobs by his fifth wife.

Bess, with a photograph of Mary Wollstonecraft on her desk, had long been a foe to marriage. She loved freely, without the constraint of municipal bureau regis-

trations or the fettering mediæval sanctities of the Church. The degeneration of one glorious mate did not vanquish her. For there could always be another. One was never disappointed exactly in the same way a second time.

Both Vicky and Amelia agreed that men were satisfactory only as lovers. As husbands and fathers they sneaked away from what society considered their duty. Only women were parents. They clung to their young, needed them.

This was the Socialist League of Petersfield in its early stages. But these people acted, whereas Petersfield only talked.

Vicky in her unrestrained voice was deep in some pathological aspect of pregnancy when Tony entered the room. He scarcely knocked. Nora hurried away.

III

The women at the dormitory reminded Nora of Cordelia and the Plant girls. The ignorance — especially of the older ones — was almost unbelievable. Petersfield, shut away as it was, had at least heard echoes from a cosmopolitan centre. They trooped in timid little parties of three or four down to Greenwich Village. Every one at home would ask them about it. They tried the Barnyard, the Dragon, and all their facsimiles with an endless variety of names, hoping each time that something would happen. The wild air of Bohemia might at least blow over them. But always the same

disappointment. Bad air, dirt, men who looked like automobile salesmen and flirted in a loud, clumsy way with the waitresses, crowded dance floors, with never a chance to dance. One sat almost smothered against the wall, waiting and waiting, and then at last went home. Cheated — cheated.

A crowd from the dormitory went to the Night Court, another New York novelty. Nora went with them. At midnight they sat in a stuffy, dimly lighted room, sickly expectant. Why had they wanted to come? An old woman stood facing the judge. She was a whimpering creature in a rusty black bonnet and cape, a hard-working widow who took lodgers. This girl couldn't pay her rent. Out of a job and every week the same tale about waiting for the money her husband was going to send her. Yes, she admitted she had threatened to turn the girl out. She had her living to make. And if the young woman started behaving bad with one of the lodgers — this young man who turned out to be a detective and got her into all this trouble — how could she help it?

The detective took the stand. He'd been sent to the house. The old lady'd been carrying on suspicious. He got the goods on her. The young woman was handed over to him by this old customer, who took charge of the whole affair. His language had none of the polysyllabic evasiveness still used by even such modernists as Helen and Amelia. For the primitive relations of human beings he used plain language. 'I told her to

take off her clothes,' the hard voice said. 'She had on only ——' The words cut Nora like a knife.

The young woman told her story. It was tragic enough. There was a lingering prettiness in her face. She spoke in a whisper. An abandoned wife, her last cent gone, making a choice between the street on a January night or the bold hints of her landlady. The old woman made the bargain. She was in the clutches of a crone who knew how to work her trade.

The judge made a caustic speech. The accused, who employed the sentimentality of widowhood, children who would do nothing for their poor mother, her own white hair, to plead for her, deserved no pity. A helpless young woman, in her ignorance coming to a cheap lodging-house she thought was respectable, trusting some one who pretended to be her friend, had been used to carry on a profitable business. The accused was sentenced to hard labor in the work-house.

Nora wanted to go. She couldn't stand any more. But the others shook their heads, and leaned forward in their seats. Two women dressed in fur coats and simple black hats, an air of restrained elegance about them, spoke in quiet tones. But they, too, were guilty of running disorderly houses.

'They weren't even painted,' one of the group commented as they stood huddled together on the snowy street.

Past them reeled a woman very drunk shouting lines from 'Paradise Lost.'

Returning from the opera a few nights ago several of them had seen with their own eyes women stopping men on the street, choosing dark places away from policemen. Women in flashy clothes with flowers in their hats. That kind always seemed to wear flowers.

On the subway to-night after two o'clock a woman opposite Nora and Mary Whitson attracted their attention. Her hair was too yellow, her brows heavily pencilled, her cheeks and chin flabby and old in spite of the paint.

'She's out of luck,' Mary confided. 'Getting old. It's trade on the streets for her now. The others — "kept" women — I meet them in the park. Fattening like geese in a pen. They're always alone dragging a little white dog behind them.'

'How do you know?' Nora insisted.

'I can tell. It's in their eyes.'

The party collected in Nora's room afterward. There was so much they must talk over. Women talking together late at night, sitting about in faded old dressing-gowns, brushing their hair, suddenly become very frank. In the morning they remember that nice women never think about sex. It wasn't that they wanted to put on any superior airs. A girl who was good because she'd never had a chance to be anything else — what virtue that way? But had the old standards disappeared? Were women like men taking experience, good and bad, as it came?

The plays they went to turned all their ideas upside

down. They were preoccupied with sex and the new attitude. The critics, commenting on the downfall of the Puritanic censorship of the stage, prophesied that at last something would happen to the American drama. But the graduate women, so innocent and inexperienced, were bewildered. They went over the whole question once more. All this sentimentality about harlots and the daring irregularity of the new woman — to what was it leading?

'It's out of date, then — the old-fashioned virgin purity business?' inquired an uncompromising little creature from Vermont. 'What they've held over us all these years — it's a fraud, then?'

They agreed that their lack of experience had not been exciting. But what else was there?

Mary Whitson lingered in Nora's room after the rest had gone. 'I've never even been kissed,' she stated boldly. 'And I'm twenty-nine. Sometimes I think — just to know what it's like — even if I didn't care for the man.'

At the beginning of the second term new men suddenly appeared in the history classes, dismissed from the training camps in this country. They wore the desperate earnestness of those who must make up for lost time. Nora wondered what they thought of the droning professors with their lecture notes, yellow sometimes with age. She speculated often about the date of the last new thought. Miss Steele had warned her of the drudgery of graduate study until she began to steer

her own boat and commanded the attention of the big men. This must be what she was to expect. But how dead, how dead it was! She remembered the words of Ezekiel which Newman had written on the view of Oxford hung in the Oratory at Birmingham: 'Son of Man, can these dry bones live?'

For while Nora's professors were fluttering old lectures, their country was churning with party hatreds, and the American people were running this way and that like a panic-stricken crowd caught in fire. The President had sailed for Europe, and the Peace Conference was in full swing. Nora found that she had to give up reading the morning papers. They upset all her work for the day. Instead she gathered several of the better weeklies representing a divergence of opinion and pondered over them Sunday mornings in her room. The discussions she had started with the women in the dormitory she had been wise enough to discontinue. Those from the South had Miss Ewing's blind devotion to the Democratic Party which closed their eyes to all but one point of view. New England Republicanism was becoming more and more bitter. And Nora had no illusions about the idealism of her own section of the country, sitting snug in the fertility of its cornfields, wheat lands, and green pastures. All it wanted was to be let alone and continue prosperous. She made secret plans to talk to the men seated near her in the history lectures. But they were too aloof and shy. The professors, on their elevated platforms, were even more remote.

Nothing but the contradictions of the weeklies. The President bewildered, baffled. One couldn't tell. A chance word caught on a street corner, on subway platforms, the top of a bus. But how futile are the words of the man in the street those know best who dream of real democracy. At last a kind of makeshift Covenant, the League of Nations, which radicals like Amelia and Vicky said was better than nothing. The left wing of the weeklies made no such concessions. The President returned, rode through the streets. It wasn't a triumphal procession. Nora stood in a vast throng and cheered. One hoped that there would be no more war. Hope was something.

IV

Amelia was beginning to neglect Tony. He wept like a whipped little boy, throwing himself on the floor in Helen's room, even when Nora was there, and cursing Amelia between his sobs. One day he took a stiletto out of his pocket and threatened to kill himself.

'Tony, you silly boy,' Helen said.

Amelia had no time for Tony now. She sent him away — told him not to bother her. Garrison Smith, a lecturer at the Labor College, spent every evening in Amelia's room talking very late. Now that the war was over, he was free to agitate a scheme for uniting the union-labor forces of England and the United States. He was sailing for Europe soon. He also planned to study schools for working-men abroad.

'Garrison certainly works his personality overtime,' Helen said of him. 'But I admire the way he manages everything. During the war he made mince-meat out of the Draft Board. Amelia and I almost die over his stories of what he told them. But I wonder if she's a match for him.'

Amelia, however, seemed very happy. She was the kind, Helen repeated to Nora, who needed a man to keep her going. With women she was pale, moaning over her aching back, hysterical in argument. But men brought out a playfulness in her, a lightness close to humor; her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkled.

Garrison Smith was frequently summoned to different cities to confer with those concerned in his British schemes. He wrote lengthy letters to Amelia asking her advice about knotty questions, telling her again and again how much he needed her, how he had grown to depend upon her. These letters she read to Helen, to Nora, even to Tony at the times he slunk back to her for comfort.

One Saturday afternoon Helen, Nora, and Amelia were picking violets on the aqueduct. They sprang out of the green grass in great luxurious patches. The flower-picking was Helen's idea. Every spring she made a pilgrimage to this violet haunt, and picked and picked. Only darkness put an end to her greedy desire to have every blossom she saw. Amelia had scruples about touching wild flowers. To her it was a kind of murder. Then, too, her back wasn't equal to the strain

of stooping. Nora, after gathering several modest clusters, joined Amelia stretched out full length on a sunny hillside, close to a bank of violets. Amelia's eyes were half shut. A smile flitted over her face. Then she sighed, a lazy, contented sigh. Nora wondered what made Amelia so happy.

Amelia stirred, but the eyes which looked up at Nora sitting near her had the emptiness of a sleep-walker's gaze.

'It was so — so wonderful — our love ——' breathed Amelia, still smiling her lazy, happy smile.

A queer, throaty sound escaped Nora's lips. Amelia looked around, like a child roused suddenly from peaceful dreams.

'Well.' Amelia's voice lost its sleepy softness. 'I mean it. You — you don't know — you don't know anything about it.' Again the happy look. 'Perhaps I shouldn't have shocked you. But I'm so — so full of it. He went away early this morning. I may never see him again. That doesn't trouble me. We had last night together.'

'And you can tell me this?'

Amelia's lips curled into something close to a smile. 'It may do you good.' She met Nora's direct, scornful look without lowering her eyes. 'And those like you. Your stiff little world. I was there once. Tight — tight like a drum — and hard. I wouldn't go back to it ——'

'And what changed you — got you out of my stiff little world?'

'Michael Powys. He was the love of my life.' Amelia's voice softened. 'At least that first quickening of love in a girl —— But how he made me suffer!'

'The way you make Tony.'

'Tony — that baby. He doesn't suffer. All show. But if he did — is it only women who should suffer?'

'You're using Tony for revenge then — revenge for what you ——'

'Perhaps. Poor Tony.'

'I can't believe you.'

'Well — a woman finds it convenient to have some kind of a sighing lover trailing after her.' This was the old, bitter Amelia. 'Men are that way. The sight of another man pursuing the woman they're after — it adds zest to the chase. Garrison saw — and other men will — that I —— I'm disgusting you, Nora. But I don't care.' Amelia sat upright and fumbled with a knot of hair falling over her neck. 'If I had your charm, Nora Deming, and your beauty — there is beauty hidden away in you somewhere. You're a fool wasting it all the way you do. Going on and on — using your brains. As if they mattered in a woman. You'll put on spectacles in a few more years — that red hair all on fire here in the sun — it'll be dull — grey. I can see you that way. And you — like ice. You don't understand. You turn up your nose because I — I with no beauty — no charm — a disgusting weak body — snatch what I can. I have. I will again. No one can make me believe I do wrong. Right and wrong — they don't exist for me.'

Helen was approaching them. 'Such richness!' she shouted. 'I've got flowers to take back to everybody.'

Nora got Helen between her and Amelia on the walk to the subway. She was sickened by the torrent of words Amelia had poured over her. Something burned in her, like a hot coal placed on raw flesh. So this was the defiant new woman insisting upon her place in the world.

Tony was waiting in Amelia's room. He bounded out of the door when he heard their steps on the stairs, like a lonely child who had waited long for its mother.

Helen in her sitting-room bent over her flowers. She spread out in a row on her couch the little nosegays she had fastened together with tough grass, and got down on her knees before them.

'The darlings — the darlings. How cool and sweet. Violet time in spring — I live for it, Nora. It's my Easter every year. We women without religion — we must have something. Woodsy — woodsy sweetlings,' she crooned to herself.

Nora, stretched out in Helen's big chair, watched Helen getting bowls for her treasures. At last they were taken care of for the night. In the morning she would distribute her flowers among the friends looking out on bare city streets. She began to murmur the chosen names.

Nora interrupted her in the midst of them. 'Helen — tell me. Do you think Amelia is — just right?'

'She told you about her farewells with Garrison,

then?' Helen laughed. 'I thought maybe she wouldn't. She thinks you're so easily shocked, Nora.'

'Yes, she told me.'

'Poor girl. She saw him off this morning. That's why I asked her to go violet-picking with us.'

'She came right out with it.'

'Yes, Amelia is very frank. And honest, too.'

'I don't see how you can stand having her here — close to you this way.'

'She doesn't bother me. And just because I happen to be a born old maid — maybe I'm fortunate. I'm not sure, though. But how can I judge what works best for a girl like Amelia?'

'I don't believe she even loves that man.'

'Garrison? Well, maybe it's better if she doesn't. You know what I think about him. He'll love many times. A generous lover.'

'How could he? I feel sick all over.'

'Yes, you would. I'm sorry, Nora. Here, take some of my violets back with you. For those graduate women of yours. They need flowers more than Amelia.' Helen's queer little chuckle was over some joke she kept to herself.

In the adjoining room Tony was laughing, a boyish laugh full of joy. Nora went back to the dormitory with a generous portion of Helen's violets. Helen made her take them, gave her a cool little peck on the cheek at parting, and laughed once more.

CHAPTER II

I

By September the United States had welcomed most of its heroes home. Nora, sitting in her history lectures, observed a new group of men, shabby some of them, with army shoes and often the army flannel shirt completing a civilian costume of a shiny coat strained at the shoulders and trousers threatening collapse in the seat. There was sturdiness and hardness about most of these men, as if, having conquered fear, hunger, disease, and vice, they asserted an animal vigor which set them apart from other men. But there were cripples too; legs and arms missing. Crutches and canes tapped in the hallways and lecture rooms. In the faces of some there was strain, suffering, a transparent pallor. They collected in little groups in the rear of Nora's history classes, talking together in low tones, deliberately closing the exchange of their experiences not only to the women, but equally to the married men and the fledglings fresh from college.

But from the first day, Nora detected a new spirit in the University. Even the professors were changed. The old droning tones had disappeared. They may have been frightened last year or only disheartened. Or were they, like actors roused to play their best before a good audience, conscious of the men sitting in the back rows?

Never before had places of learning been crowded with so serious a student body as in the fall of 1919. Perhaps they never will be again. At last there seemed to be earnest concentration upon education, a hunger for new ideas and enlightenment. Every man returning from France seemed sure of one thing — that for the complications of life, stripped now of its former vapid American idealism, he must know more. In the tensity of the classroom Nora built up these speculations.

Among the history lecturers was Professor Nicholson, with grey hair straggling over a face that had a curious, unconquerable youth. In what the other professors said one found the same new note of radicalism creeping in, subtle generally and evasive, but there for the discerning. They, too, made frequent comparisons with modern events, clarifying and interpreting both old and new. But, in spite of these resemblances, he stood out above them. The first day she could not quite catch the difference. Was it a closer reality he reached, a more intense experience?

The women around Nora whispered that Professor Nicholson had been studying in England when war was declared. At once he offered himself as an ambulance driver. Later he enlisted as a private. He had seen hard fighting in the Argonne drive, been wounded. Nora wondered how much these women knew. He was a small man, slight, almost delicate, and the eyes and sensitive mouth did not suggest ambulances or shell fire. But the nose, large, aggressive, riding over the fine

lines of the rest of the face, was not that of a dreamer. One of Nora's neighbors repeated what a man who had studied under him before the war had told her. He was just the usual scholar then, a good lecturer, but all brilliant theory like the others. The war had changed him.

The opening lectures in a course dealing with nineteenth-century England pictured manufacturing and agricultural England before the Industrial Revolution. The vividness of phrase, the pictorial and dramatic effect, were unforgettable. Miss Steele's conception of the historian, a kind of recording angel, looking back, seeing in the present both the past and the future, but not a cruel recording angel — pitying, understanding — Professor Nicholson seemed like that.

Behind Nora sat a unique specimen of graduate student, handsome, fashionably dressed, his well-set-up figure and lean muscular frame suggesting a steady programme of games and exercise rather than hard work. From his conversations with his companion Nora pieced together those first days a fairly complete biography. He had been studying at Oxford when the war broke out, offered himself for British service at once, and was later transferred to an American regiment. But he described a machine-gun attack in the style of a tennis match, a polo game, or a drag-hunt. Fighting was the duty of a gentleman, disagreeable sometimes, but a game, an adventure.

In the basement room of the library Nora, snatching

a cup of tea, watched a man at the same table turning over the pages of a green paper pamphlet as he sipped coffee. On the chair beside him were crutches. She remembered that he was in one of her classes. As he read here and there, he scowled and muttered to himself, unconscious of her watching him. Something about the peace conference, Nora gathered from a chapter heading.

'Have you found something good about the war?' she asked him at last.

He looked up, still scowling. 'What every one will be thinking five years from now.'

She looked at the author, the most famous of British dramatists. 'I'd like to get the book,' she said.

'I brought it back with me. You can't get it here.'

'I'd like to read it,' she persisted.

'You wouldn't like it. No woman would.'

'Do you think all women have the same opinions?'

'Well — they're idealists. They wouldn't care for this straight stuff. I've been home six months.' He laughed.

'I don't pretend to know anything about the war. I've heard nothing from any man who was actually there. I watch all of you talking together ——'

'If you'd like to read this — I'm through with it.'

She thanked him, and he hobbled away.

The book gave Nora a new boldness. She came to her classes late, the seats in front all filled by the women who strove daily for those closest to the lecturer. A

vacant chair was to be found only in the rear of the room. The men were talking. She caught stray words, unintelligible slang, foreign phrases.

'I can't — I can't believe it was for nothing,' a strained voice said behind her. 'Being wounded — suffering the way some of us have — all for nothing.' The other men were silent. 'I won't believe it,' he concluded in the same grey tones.

How could a woman know what these men thought except by the crime of eavesdropping? If she could only talk to them. Between them and her was an invisible wall, stronger than stone and mortar.

Another time she heard; 'But it all ends the same way. It was hell, but not one of us would have missed it. Nothing in the end. Months wasted. Everything here gone to the bow-wows. But those who didn't get into the scrap are outside. They know it. They don't belong to our generation.'

Professor Nicholson had finished his introductory lectures. He was now plunged into the intricacies of a new age, with its machinery in factories, its locomotives and steamships. The classes were set to drawing steam engines and spinning-jennies. When they had recovered from the first bewilderment, they visited a cotton mill in New Jersey, located in a gaunt town where smelly canals, a river stagnant with refuse, and tenement houses built of a gloomy native stone swarmed with the children whose parents were employed in the mill. It was not a cheerful introduction. The mill itself was

almost overpowering to those who had never seen the textile industry at first hand. The smells, the terrible heat in some of the rooms, the thundering noises were a revelation of the heights to which human endurance could be stretched. The preparing rooms were the most revolting. American cotton, the dirtiest and the poorest on the market, was a tough proposition, some of the men said. They got together and talked with Professor Nicholson, in spite of the noise, when the foreman walked ahead. Nora tried to push herself near them.

She caught a reference to the steel strike, which now made newspaper headlines. The noise shut out the rest. Men talking together about vital things, the facts without sentimentality, what happened from day to day, and women on the outside exchanging the same twaddle. It was hopeless, unfair, but what could she do about it?

A woman sticking close to her kept repeating: 'I think it's dreadful — dreadful. I never knew it was like this. The only mill I've ever been in was a flour mill — such a nice clean place.'

In the carding-room cotton fluff drifted like snow over the hair of the girls, their faces stolid, almost inhuman. The atmosphere in which they toiled eight hours daily had a stench like burned salad oil. The air vibrated with the continuous screeching roar of the machinery. But when the foreman's back was turned, the girls' lips moved.

Professor Nicholson afterward described the Apex Mill as above the average, with good lighting, a fairly modern ventilating system, and excellent vacuum apparatus for clearing the cotton fluff out of the air. Although it wasn't ideal, the general management was decent. The problems of shifting foreign labor and competition with the Southern cotton mills, with lax State laws and child labor, complicated the policy of many employers. Nora remembered the reforming zeal of Ellen Standish and her obdurate father. Perhaps Ellen had not been entirely fair with him. The professor seemed to be straining himself for an almost superhuman fairness, a little dark man near Nora remarked.

The lectures on industrial England were soon crowded with men. Extra chairs had to be brought in. Professor Nicholson, his clear voice racing over swift sentences, presented his material by running comments on contemporary problems. He quoted novels Nora had never read, eloquent with the misery of adjustment, the exploitation of the helpless, the greed of capitalists whom the new era had given sudden power. He read lines from a poet Nora thought she knew. This was the stuff men wanted in a university. Some of the women were bewildered by the mechanical terms and scientific conceptions.

'Is this history?' one of them inquired of Nora.

At the close of the hour the men in the back seats crowded around the lecture platform. They got very

much excited over the discussion of issues raised, their voices loud, their eyes and arms enforcing what they said. From chance phrases one guessed that they were fighting the war all over again. These men transformed all they heard into their own experience. As all roads lead to Rome, so did all history for them speak in what they themselves had seen. And Nora on the outside could only gnash her teeth in silent rage.

Nora sought out Professor Nicholson in his office. She was not satisfied with her courses, she explained. They were too narrow, not giving her the sweep of vision she must have. He listened while she reviewed what she had studied, what she had tried to do the year before.

'You've got a big job —— nineteenth-century England,' he commented when she was through.

'I know — I know very well. But I want to really understand — why England was what she was — the attitude of other countries to her — all of it. I've started ——'

He advised her to go to literature. English — she knew fairly well. But German and French ——

'Of course I'm outlining a job for life,' he smiled, the baffling freshness in his face. Freshness — youth — it was ideas, fresh ideas, caring for them more than for life, which made a man look like Professor Nicholson.

"That's what I want," she gasped eagerly, "a real job."

Nora met the crippled soldier again in the basement refreshment room and returned his book.

'I agree with you,' she began.

'Really?' His tone was almost rude.

As she was trying to frame a reply, another man sat down beside him. 'Well, Perkins. How goes it?'

Mr. Perkins attempted an awkward introduction. 'My friend John Harper.'

'Nora Deming,' she helped him. 'Mr. Perkins and I have been talking about the war.'

'That's what he and I talk about, too,' the stranger said. He had a way of looking straight at one when he talked that was a little disconcerting at first. He was a graduate student in economics like Perkins, he informed her. He had decided when he got out of the army that he didn't want to go back into business.

'I was one of these efficiency experts,' he said. 'Office manager for the Zenith Rubber Company. I enlisted because I got bored stiff making patriotic speeches.'

He and Perkins laughed, and Nora, after a moment, joined them. Mr. Harper was the first young business man she had ever known. One of the new school strange to her. The business men in Maronac, even Eleanor's father at the Dry Docks, were leisurely in speech and action. The young man evidently rushed things through. He spoke rapidly, examining his listener with his restless eyes, never entirely serious, however.

Nora came upon the two men in the same place the following day. Mr. Harper was starting a story.

'I was telling about a German prisoner brought in by some men in our company. He got down on his knees to the captain. A butcher with ten children, he said. Fat as a sausage — middle-aged. We let him go. He started off — looking back at us like a — a rat. Then he began to run. The lines were so close together we could watch him almost up to his own gang. All safe. He turned. Waved to us. His deliverers.' The story was interrupted by laughter. 'Then he — he went right up in the air. Blown to bits — pieces of him going straight up. We'd stuck a bomb with a time-fuse in Fritz's pocket. It went off just the right minute — inside his own lines.'

Both men were laughing.

'Do you think that's a funny story?' Nora inquired in amazement, looking first at one and then at the other.

They were now roaring with laughter. 'Killing,' Mr. Harper explained. 'Let me tell you the game we played with Hun prisoners that jumped on the running-board of our staff car. We stepped on the gas and shot them off like bottles in a row.'

Nora rose. 'I'm afraid I haven't learned war humor yet,' she said.

Evidently a new kind had developed. A man limping across the campus remarked to his companion, 'They say the main advantage of a wooden leg is that you can

hold up your sock with a carpet tack. But even better — I don't have to change the sock on my game foot. It can be regarded as more or less permanent.'

II

On Sunday afternoon Nora was invited to Professor Nicholson's to tea. A stuffy, overheated room filled with people, too much furniture, and an overdressed, gushing woman fussing about among her guests. In the confusion Nora discerned two or three graduate students grouped around Professor Nicholson. Mrs. Nicholson at once began describing to Nora her terrible sufferings while her husband was in France.

'I never thought I'd live through it. The days — the nights worse. Of course he didn't have to go. But I never complained.' She finished with a grimace, intended for a smile, which made Nora inwardly shudder. 'I suppose you're crazy about my husband. All his students are. It's all I hear — how wonderful he is.'

She then turned to the woman on the other side, evidently an old friend, and began an exchange of gossip, mentioning some of Nora's professors, in a high-pitched voice.

Before Nora left, she had a few moments with Professor Nicholson. He expressed regret that he had been unable to talk with her, hoped to see her again soon to hear how she was getting on. Then she left, dismissed with another grimace from her hostess, and a hard throaty sound caricaturing laughter.

On her way back to the dormitory Nora met Mr. Harper, who asked if he might join her. After a few preliminary remarks, he began to talk of himself. In the midst of his economic studies he was trying to get caught up with the new books. His friend Perkins was a great reader. But both he and Perkins floundered in places. In the realm of ideas, the discussion of contemporary problems, they felt safe enough. But all this art stuff ——

Nora in a spirit of mischief advised him to read 'The Tragic Muse.' 'James, you know,' she explained.

'Is that he-man stuff?'

'I don't know. It depends on the man, you see ——'

'All this diagnosis of the soul since the war. I'm not much for that. Wells — in those first books. He started me going — that man.'

'But did he carry you very far? I like my ideas dished out straight. Not lost in all his verbiage.'

'Of course Shaw,' went on Mr. Harper; 'there's the giant of the crowd. And I'm reading Tolstoy.'

He hovered at the door of the women's hall until Nora had to ask him in. He looked around with his appraising glance. She could see that he was amused. He settled himself on the nearest sofa, not quite at ease, but making a pretense of boldness, as the graduate women filed past slowly enough to make an examination of him and Nora sitting there.

'It was the army that got me out of business,' he was finally explaining. 'Queer how it was, too. I was on to

all the tricks. They're the same ones. The only difference is that business is efficient. Things move along. In the army it was an unholy mess. I never wasted time hating the Germans. They were a devilish smart crowd — a lot o' them. But the colonel of our outfit — when he wasn't drunk ——'

'I understand,' Nora said.

'Well — lugging him out of one scrape after another —— Orders one day. All off the next. What my poor men had to stand — I was swearing blue devils most o' the time. Old Jack we called him — old Jack loved power. To make us hop around just to see us hop — that was the man. I got some of my old stuff handed back to me. Business organization — it means driving men under you. I was good at it. But the army got under my skin. I couldn't come back and see men scared to death — white-collar slaves — jumping around when I snapped my fingers. If I go into business again — I won't be a slave-driver. I haven't got it thought out yet. But in a year here —— You ought to hear Doctor Lewis lecture. Industrial Problems. It's great stuff. The man knows what he's talking about. He can't fool me.'

The dinner bell rang, and Mr. Harper rose. 'D'you ever get out of this place?'

'Oh, yes,' Nora assured him.

'Could you — would you give me the pleasure — a show or something ——'

III

Everywhere Nora went she met John Harper, always correctly dressed and with something new to talk over. In the dingy basement room, up in the history stacks where she foraged around for books, and in the reading-room used by economics as well as by history students. His energy carried him everywhere. When she left the library before dinner, he, too, was ready to leave for the day. At first she regarded these encounters as accidental. Then something in the way he looked at her, a new softness in his sharply darting eyes, made her self-conscious and shy.

'Can't we have dinner somewhere?' he suggested, standing on the steps of the dormitory. Inside Nora knew a business meeting was awaiting her.

'Thanks very much. Yes, I should like to. But I I must hurry to my meeting now.' The closing of the door gave her a sense of relief, of escape.

Three solemn young men on a sofa balancing tea-cups were facing two women in the parlor. Nora, the vice-president of the Women's History Club, arriving late, was being introduced by Miss Stark, the president, a very energetic woman, to what she learned was the executive committee of the Men's History Club.

'I feel so sorry for all these young girls coming to New York and never meeting any of you young men here at Knickerbocker,' Miss Stark was saying.

One of the young men looked interested, a second cautious, the third, also the president, alarmed.

'I didn't come to Knickerbocker to meet young women,' he declared, with a candor Nora could not help admiring.

As the discussion developed, she had a confused recollection of Miss Stark's theory that the two societies devoted to historical studies should become one.

'It doesn't seem fair for us women to miss the lively discussions you men have,' the secretary, Miss Fleet, said, with a smile which swept over the trio on the sofa. Miss Fleet in Missouri, Nora suspected, had a way with men.

'Our meetings are very dull,' the interested young man observed.

'Perhaps the young women would liven them up for you,' Miss Stark ventured.

'Scholarly discussions are never lively,' the president remarked, with finality, looking around him as if he wanted to escape.

'Don't you think it would be a good idea for the two clubs to join, Miss Deming?'

Nora started. Miss Stark was looking to her support.

'I — I hadn't thought of it before. I don't know. But the men don't seem to want it.' Her glance was directed toward the president. He appeared a little flustered.

Miss Stark drew herself up proudly in her high-backed chair. 'I never knew before there was sex in history.'

'There's sex in everything,' the president said firmly. Then, reaching for a battered hat, he rose and shook

hands solemnly with Miss Stark, concluding with a stiff jerk of a bow. The cautious young man was beside him. The enthusiastic young man was still talking to Miss Fleet about the book he was writing, but, when they were close to the door, he, too, scuttled away.

'Why didn't you help me out?' Miss Stark turned upon Nora.

The women's club was stupid enough. But whether the addition of men would help it any was uncertain. An unwieldy organization, trying clumsily to be wise, or, better still, according to Miss Stark, to be sociable, did not attract Nora.

It was clear enough the men didn't want the women. Men serious about their work usually preferred to keep to themselves. They could be violent with their own sex, if they had to be. But with women — that outworn chivalry. It would always keep men and women apart. Chivalry may have gone along well enough when fair ladies kept to their bowers behind castle walls. But now, when women were getting into everything, a man had to look out. If he could fight her like another man —— But he could only despise her and wish she'd stay in her place.

And what women studying history at Knickerbocker had anything to contribute to the men's discussions? Was there anything that they really yearned to have dragged out into the fierce light of real mental combat? Around Nora daily buzzed girls from every State in the Union, many of them, as Miss Stark had hinted, crazy

to meet young men. They were open about declaring, for any one to hear, just why they had come to Knickerbocker University. Studying was an excuse for being in New York. New York was crowded with young men, they had thought back home. But once in the great city, tucked away in a woman's hall, with the matron's experienced eye upon them, existence had no immediate flame. They joked before Nora about sitting beside the good-looking men at lectures. They asked them the time, borrowed their newspapers, appealed to them when their fountain pens went dry. But graduate students were nuts — most of them — and even the handsomer ones hadn't a cent. Far more alluring the hall just across the street, that wide, relentless barrier. The girls had recently been experimenting with lamp signals. Two or three gathered in one room. Then they began turning a study-lamp off and on in a new kind of wig-wagging game. A quick response from Knickerbocker undergraduates. Between them a code was developed. Meetings were arranged on near-by corners. One girl returned from a Greenwich Village dance at six in the morning. The matron was growing suspicious. The older women in the dormitory must have told tales.

Women past their first youth have so little sympathy with the adventures of their own sex. There was Miss Johnston on Nora's corridor. She had become a joke, a kind of tradition. No one knew how many years she had been studying at Knickerbocker. She had long ago taken every course offered by the history department.

A new series of lectures roused her like a small boy hearing a fire-engine. Off once more. One more subject to conquer. She was engulfed in some vast scheme in which she wandered over anthropological wastes and historic dawns to prove her theory. Her book, when it was done, might run into three volumes. Once she had hoped to crowd it down into two. In all this she was supported by the earnings of an elderly uncle, who had once dreamed of scholarship and had got stranded in business. His niece read on year after year — miles and miles of books — and told him all about her latest and best conclusion.

Then there was Anna Downing, waiting day by day for the arrival of her brother's body from France. He had been a captain, a much-loved older brother. Her face fell into deeper grey lines, she drank more cups of coffee, and her eyes glittered uncomfortably for those who talked to her. Only last year she had been the wittiest of Nora's neighbors.

Alice Conway was a poet. At least she wrote verse and studied philosophy, a not infrequent combination. She had recently got the notion that the dormitory women were making derogatory remarks behind her back — saying her mind was affected. She wanted them to know she was as sane as anybody. If she found the person who started the story about her not being quite right ——

All of the women Nora knew studied too much, with the conscientiousness they should have outgrown with

pigtails. Their chief satisfaction was in recounting how many pages they read daily, how many consecutive hours they toiled in the library, how late they sat up over their work. They admitted that they were always tired — nothing seemed worth while. If they went to a symphony concert, the music shot nervous pains all through their bodies, like an electric shock. And the theatre — what they had looked forward to more than anything else — probably they had been too tired to go.

Why do women cling to the phantom — that most deceptive phantom — the joy one finds in the play of the mind? They cling to it long after all other hopes are gone. Happiness or intelligence in women — which is rarer? Do any women have both? The Brontë sisters — genius and wretchedness. What they did — walled around with the stony barriers of a limited experience. Elizabeth Barrett — but was she really intelligent? George Eliot — getting revenge for the stiff provincial conscience of Marian Evans by tormenting poor little Hetty Sorrel. And the women of power. Catharine of Russia — Queen Elizabeth in England — giants both of them — relentless — using men for their own determined ends. But when were they happy?

The little blonde girl from Tennessee worked harder than any one. At least the strain bore down upon her more. She had gone to a very poor college. She realized that now. Most of the time she didn't know what the professor was talking about — just chaos. She read sentences in reference books again and again, but she

couldn't make them out. What was the matter with her? She appealed to Nora. At night her throat ached so. She couldn't sleep. Maybe she ought to go home. But no, she couldn't do that.

One night all of Nora's floor was roused past midnight. People rushing back and forth. The poor little thing from Tennessee had jumped out of her window. She was dead when they found her on the pavement below.

IV

John Harper said women couldn't stand the strain of too much study — at least not many of them.

'They go straight off,' he said, seated across the table from Nora in an Italian restaurant south of the Square, not unlike the one where Nora and Mary Howe listened to the poetic raptures of Eddie Gaston that night so long ago. 'The reason, clearly enough, is that they don't really want to study. Now if you force yourself to do a thing — put on the screws tight — there's trouble. Like this poor girl you told me about. Collapse.' Mr. Harper, with none of Helen's agile psychological terms, had the latest theories.

'Yes,' Nora agreed, 'but what about the women who really prefer the intellectual life to everything else — their professional career whatever it may be? What of them?'

'Let them have it,' he declared generously. 'They're the minority.' He looked across at Nora with his disconcerting directness. 'Is that what you prefer?'

Nora blushed, looked down at her plate. 'I — I don't know. But my friends — several of them who have already done splendid work — it's the first rank — competing with men ——'

'Women in business — really good ones — I met them once in a while. But they were hard. And at Knickerbocker — well ——'

'The good ones are there. Not many, of course. But how many really good men are there either?'

Nora took John Harper one Sunday afternoon to have tea with Helen Spring. They got on famously together.

'He's a real man,' Helen observed to Nora afterward. 'I like him. I'm glad you're meeting men up there at the University.' She sighed. 'After a whole week of women —— But, of course, that's my job.'

Helen had taken her first position, a good one she was told by her superiors, in a home for fallen girls, concealed under the euphemistic name 'Rest Cottage.' But its inmates never rested. They were like caged lionesses waiting to escape back to their old life. They put on the proper conversions. They told Helen sobbing stories of early temptations, cruel parents, poverty. All that was true enough. But their emotion didn't conceal their hatred of the peace of Rest Cottage, where they were safe, well fed, and employed in tasks designed to be unexciting and corrective.

To a scientist convinced that the new psychology will immediately minister to a mind diseased, Rest Cottage was discouraging. But one found there every form of

mental variety. It was a remarkable laboratory. The inmates, properly pigeonholed by the staff of psychoanalysts, were a most satisfying group of individuals for scientific purposes.

Helen's speech during the first experiments in her new job was an almost unintelligible jargon to laity like Nora. Simple introverts and extraverts, objective extraverts and introverts, emotional introverts and subjective extraverts. It was as bad as old Polonius and his classification of plays. '"Pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral,"' jeered Nora. '"Manics, dementia præcox, paranoiacs," ' she recited.

'You keep quiet,' Helen threatened, starting off next on libidos, which were equally various — collective, unconscious, desexualized, introverted, extraverted, excessive — many more.

But gradually the job got hold of Helen. She wanted to cure those poor creatures. When all the analyzing was done, what next? They didn't want to be different. Gradually Helen suspected what they did want. The husband of one of the psychologists knew what they wanted most. To the pretty, lively ones, he gave it. One of Helen's patients confided that he felt sorry for the girls. He was such an affectionate man, she added. All the time he encouraged his wife to go on with her remarkable cures. It was a terrible mess. And Helen, knowing all that horror, had to keep quiet.

Then Zoe Ryder refused to go on any more cases.

She'd starve first. But before beginning the process of starvation, described as painless by those who have tried its early stages, Zoe borrowed money of all her friends. The money she used for her new business venture of making lamp-shades. Out of scraps of silk she contrived boudoir lamps of every color and design — as delicate as flowers. Parchment and paper, cretonnes, chintzes — she contrived an endless variety. They were all charming. Before Christmas she had more orders than she could fill. But sitting in a little back room in Greenwich Village making lamp-shades got tiresome long before spring. For a change Zoe lived in luxury and ease, sat in Washington Square, and began to write a play, with all the neighborhood Italian children swarming around her. A friend got her the offer of being a permanent nurse to a delicate child, but Zoe would not listen to flattery about her magic ways with children. She made the rounds of her friends a second time, less successfully, but still she got enough to keep the play going. She would never make another lamp-shade. She quarrelled with Helen, who made the suggestion. A tea-room in the Village, where only creative artists came, was now her great ambition. If she could get the necessary capital —— In the meantime actors were begging her for parts in her new play. She was a pathological case, Helen stated, scolding Amelia for lending her more money.

Vicky's Lady Needleworkers had been out on strike all winter. Vicky told them to hold firm. They hung on,

eating less and less, trying to stretch out the union relief fund to the utmost of its capacity. Then they came to Vicky, who had been leading their fight so valiantly. They couldn't pay her salary. They reminded her that last year they paid every cent. Three thousand dollars. But Vicky couldn't live without money. She would have to resign. Her mother and brother, still keeping guard from the windows of a Park Avenue apartment hotel, might have tided her over. But that would have meant the regular life appropriate to those regions. The needleworkers were sorry. She had lent elegance to their cause — a real lady and all. It was too much to expect she'd keep on with them. But they'd hoped ——

Amelia was furious at Vicky's desertion of these plucky fighters.

'She'll never get another job at three thousand dollars a year because she was born a lady,' commented Helen sagely. 'She's lazy — untrained.'

'And dishonest,' added Amelia. 'She's tried to conceal the fact that she's been living with Max Goldberg all winter. If she'd been honest about it ——'

'Well,' Helen excused her, 'she knew he'd tire of her soon. He generally demands more intelligence than she's got to show. Don't be too hard, Amelia.'

When Nora told John Harper about Miss Hamilton's treachery to the needleworkers, he was much amused.

'What else did you expect? There's no one so keen about money as those who have had it. Your friend is a good business woman. No nonsense about her. I re-

spect her. She'll come out on top. And the needle-workers — when the trades get rid of their snobbery and sentiment, they won't need ladies to manage their scraps for 'em.'

There was something hard and relentless about John Harper. Was it only masculinity? Nora had known too few men to be sure. If only — something about him — not quite. How disgusting she was! How narrow and stupid! She revolted from her own thoughts.

While Vicky looked for a new job, Amelia used the bits of leisure left her by the Labor College in getting Tony married off to somebody. She was bored with Tony — not only Tony, but all Italians. They were materialistic — at least on American soil. The Russians were her next hope — the only people who in the twentieth century still have souls.

'Well,' sighed Amelia as the sixteen-year-old bride of Antonio d'Angelo floated out of the church under a canopy of bridal veil and orange blossoms beside her beautiful new husband, 'I kept him out of the gang. She can take care of him now.'

Amelia was busy soliciting funds for a new colony of rare spirits to be started in the country, providing a combination of intellectual and manual labor, and in connection a school for the poor, Russians preferred.

'Hasn't that been tried before?' asked Nora. 'Some of the colony don't work. Others get tired of one another and start fighting.'

'All of us will dress in grey — a neutral shade,'

Amelia persisted, thinking only of her newest enterprise.

When the news of Garrison Smith's marriage to an English socialist came, Amelia had just been informed that the son of a fabulously rich father had inherited more than a million dollars to lay at the feet of the colony. Amelia had no time for anything else. Garrison was hardly mentioned.

'It's a blessing she's got this other thing,' breathed Helen. 'Don't say anything against her colony, Nora. You've got your young man caught. I can see that.'

'Helen!' warned Nora, turning crimson. Nora had brought Mr. Harper down to tea again. 'Don't you say that. If you do, I'll never — never see him again.'

'Don't be a fool, my child.'

The rush of events warned Nora that John Harper must soon be reckoned with. This determined young man, who had been successful in everything else he had undertaken, was in love with Nora. Any one could see it. It burst out of him everywhere like a riotous flood, Helen, looking straight at Nora with a defiant air, told her.

Nora began placing obstacles in the way of his frequent invitations, but somehow he climbed over them. Often she was relieved when he did. Dinners in quiet restaurants away from the noise and the smell of the cafeteria, surrounded by people without the scars of intellectual struggles, examining a menu card with no thrifty eyes on the price list, spinning away from dinner to the theatre in a taxi without watching the expensive

revolutions of the metre, enjoying a play or a concert unhampered by the cramped discomfort of balcony heights — were luxuries Nora had come to count upon during the winter. More than that was the stimulation of talking to a man with vigorous opinions, whose prejudices, even if they were irritating, were at least never feminine. There was the new sensation of not having to look out for one's self, to cross the street with no fear of cars darting out of unexpected corners, to walk along a dark passage without even a shiver of trepidation, to escape in companionship one's own doubts.

'But you can't go on this way forever,' warned Helen, who had studied all of the uncertain ways of men and women.

Nora and John Harper, walking home briskly from the theatre, crossed the park. Under the trees, with their lacy shadows over the path, there was escape from the glare of the lights and the steady traffic, a thin quietness with a lazy, pleasant hum beneath it. Nora did not see the lovers on the benches locked in heavy, passionate embraces, nor the homeless men slinking off to a dark corner to find a bed away from the policeman's beat. She paused close to the Japanese cherry trees in the height of blossoming.

'How sweet — sweet,' she murmured, turning to her companion.

They stood breathing in the scented spring air. She took a step forward, but strong arms held her back, enclosed her.

'At last — my darling,' he breathed close to her cheek. He was crushing her against him with his rough, masculine strength, outraging some blind fighting instinct in her.

'No — no!' She tried to free herself, trembling with rage.

'I love you,' he went on, not releasing her, pressing his lips against hers. 'My proud little girl.'

'No,' she repeated, pulling herself away with a quick wrench, clenching her lips against the sobs in her throat.

'You mean you don't care for me?'

She began to walk rapidly, faster and faster, gathering speed, almost running over the ground. If she could get back on the crowded pavements, with people passing and lights, she would be safe.

'You don't need to be afraid of me,' the voice beside her was saying.

They went the rest of the way in silence, she still sweeping over the terrifying stretch of streets like a home-bound swallow, he stalking beside her with hard, pounding strides. At the door of the women's dormitory, she said a quick good-night.

In her room she was eager to turn out her light, to hide herself away in the darkness. How dared he? she kept repeating to herself. Lying in bed, she trembled all over. A chill seized her, coming out in icy drops on her forehead, making her lips chatter, her fingers stiffen, her feet dead weights. Then she was burning up with fever. This man had done something to her — battered down

the outer fortifications of her woman's world, made her, for the first time, afraid — afraid because she was a woman.

She knew now why she had run away — locked herself up in this room high above the city streets. She must save herself. If he had urged her — held out against her battling opposition — something inside might have crumpled, and she —— That was what it meant to be a woman — weak, surrendering to brute force.

But she had saved herself. They didn't match. She knew. They didn't belong to each other.

Toward morning, with the dawn making timid grey shadows in her room, Nora was calm enough to go back over everything. There had been doubts from the start. He was too well dressed, too sure of himself, too self-consciously correct. And too — too hard. Almost the first time she met him he affected her like shiny new furniture in shop windows. She had tried to remember his finer qualities, his kindness and generosity. But those things dear to her, which made the delicate flavor to life, did not exist for him. No — no — they could never belong to each other.

The morning light danced over the white paper on Nora's study table, the cover on the bureau, the expanse of mirror, the walls. There were flickers of dawn, then the sunshine at last in her face. Drawing up the covers, she hid herself away from the hard brightness of the day, and wept.

CHAPTER III

I

Nora was unpacking her trunk in her old room in Petersfield. Margaret Abington, looking in at the door, hesitated shyly at the threshold.

'I kept hoping all the time,' sighed Margaret, 'that something better — something would turn up in New York.'

'You don't want me here, then?' Nora looked up from the depths of her trunk.

'I was trying to eliminate my own choice,' Margaret said solemnly.

Margaret looked very tired, worn, sucked dry. They had come up to Petersfield on the same train after two busy days in New York spent in arranging Margaret's fall exhibition, a ceremony which generally left her exhausted but radiant. But as Nora had watched her old friend, silent and gloomy, superintending the hanging of her pictures, she knew that Margaret wasn't well. And yet, standing in the little gallery taken over by the New Society of Women Artists before Margaret's last painting — the doorway of a fisherman's cottage opening out upon a dull sea, in the foreground the gay, old-fashioned flowers which grow best with simple care, their bright colors standing out with a kind of jubilation against the troubled sky and sea — one sensed the joy

of creation. Margaret, so sombre herself — all the energy driven out of her.

'Those fleeting precious summer weeks,' she murmured, as if she were alone. The brilliance in her eyes burned for an instant, then changed to dull despair. 'My summer all gone. So little done.' She crept out of the room.

In returning to her profession, Nora was trying to convince herself that she had no illusions about her future. The vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, without the religious exaltation — these were the rules of the order to which she was attached. But if a woman threw herself entirely into her work, she seemed in the end to find something which fed her spirit.

There was Ruth Ewing. Nora had visited her at her scientific station on the Massachusetts coast not far from Margaret's studio. After a laborious day hunting and studying specimens, Ruth leaped into the sea and followed the path of the moonlight. In the water, beauty, grace, the swiftness of a fish or a mermaid came to this plain little spinster. Her emotions swept over the sky, over birds, butterflies, bugs of the less ethereal kingdoms, flowers, plants, germs, with the same unspoiled joy. Men like John Harper would say that science dried up a woman, but nothing would ever dry up the pools of Ruth Ewing's fresh spirit. Nora and Margaret had left her in a New York laboratory working beside a man, both of them trying to isolate the influenza germ. Neither one thought of his own glori-

fication. They were the servants of sick humanity. Their sexless coöperation seemed to Nora very fine. Disembodied mind — that was the goal of mankind. As she watched their generosity, each placing the results of his former experiments at the disposal of the other, she felt something of the heights to which science, once so lowly and despised, has climbed. Hearing Ruth talk made one realize what an intellectual outlet meant for women.

But Margaret Abington said Ruth was a pathetic creature. Margaret didn't appreciate science. Nor did she appreciate Ruth's strenuous enjoyment of the natural world, without contemplation or real æsthetic appreciation, always darting after something outdoors to name and classify it, to add it to her store of memory. Margaret's way was so different. She let beauty take her unaware. But the result for her as for Ruth was the same; the same absorption, the same fusion of the individual with his accomplishment.

The problem of women whose entire sex interest has gone into their work belongs to the present. The old painters sentimentalized the virgin with her rapturous gaze upon her young child. But physical creation is the labor of only one class of women. Miss Steele had the uplifted expression of a Raphael Madonna when she started a new book and Ruth Ewing when she was pursuing a new germ. This emotional devotion to some kind of work — this was what Nora must find if Petersfield was to be endurable.

Saying good-bye to Michael and Ellen Powys on the pier, Ellen with her first baby, sure that nothing was important but babies, Nora felt debased — frustrated — wasted in life. Women with intellectual progeny never flaunted their self-satisfaction that way. Nora didn't care if she never saw Ellen again. Michael's father had died, leaving a generous fortune to his son with the stipulation that he never step his foot in the factory, reserved to the management of Michael's conservative older brother. Of course they were disappointed. But with the money they were embarking to London to start a new liberal weekly. At least Michael was. Ellen, as a mother, left the reform of the world to others. Nora waved to her old friend and watched her sail out of her life with no regrets. The women at Petersfield — they meant her future.

A return to the old life. But during the first days Nora felt like a stranger. The war had changed Petersfield. During the house shortage, commuters had discovered the quiet village, had built a row of attractive suburban dwellings on the street leading to the campus, and persuaded the railroad to put on express trains between New York and Petersfield, with excellent service. The journey was now simpler than the subway stretch between Knickerbocker University and Wall Street. For a member of the faculty, returning from graduate study with an indefinite stretch of years divided between teaching and mad plunges into Knickerbocker lectures and seminars, residence within suburban limits had special advantages.

But there were other changes. The girls had changed. Most of them had bobbed hair, wore short skirts, and adopted a costume common over the entire country, one heard, among college women. There were two variations: a smart sweater over a ruffled blouse and a pleated skirt, or the pleated skirt with a blouse in coat effect fastened below the waist with a leather belt. A plain felt hat completed the desired effect. Even the woollen stockings now in vogue kept close to one model. Girls between seventeen and twenty-two all looked alike, and the delicacy and grace which a democracy in fashion did not entirely conceal was hidden as if the owner were ashamed of distinction.

Possibly the college world has always appropriated a homogeneous style to characterize its own order. She may have forgotten. There was the Peter Thompson sailor-suit just waning in Nora's freshman year. Yet surely there was more individuality then.

Walking alone at the end of her first day of lectures, Nora approached the graveyard where the Suffrage League had kept its night vigils. She laughed aloud at the memory. She wanted to see how the old place looked. She heard voices.

Seated on the tombstones was a group of girls all having an afternoon smoke together. When they saw one of the faculty, they rose, greeted her cordially, and invited her to join them. No traces of embarrassment, even though cigarettes were forbidden by college rules. Conservative mothers from the Middle West still terrorized over the academic authorities.

Everywhere one heard about the new frankness among girls. Frankness was their code. They acted as they thought, Nora soon observed. A distinguished English poet came to lecture, and the girls, expecting to hear him read his verse, crowded the hall. But he happened to be a critic as well, and, in a voice so low it reached only the first ten or twelve rows, read a highly involved study of a Victorian poet. The students in the back rows slid out. Those in the centre began trickling away. Bolder spirits marched out of the hall. At last only those near the platform remained.

Professor Steele was enraged by such rudeness to a guest. But the girls proclaimed their intention of defending themselves against boredom. No good came of it. Let lecturers speak out good and loud, and they would stay to listen.

In the exchange of undergraduate ideas speech was full of psychological tags. Only a friend like Helen enabled Nora to meet this new college generation. A freshman was greeted her first day with a charge of the Œdipus complex, against which she must defend herself. Intimacies between two girls were watched with keen, distrustful eyes. Among one's classmates, one looked for the bisexual type, the masculine girl searching for a feminine counterpart, and one ridiculed their devotions.

'But are they really so sophisticated as they seem?' Nora appealed to Margaret Abington as she finished recounting a student's avowal of feminine independence, in which adventures of sex loomed dangerously.

'They're as innocent as babes,' Margaret declared. 'It's pathetic. All that talk is a protective armor. Those who don't talk — the old-fashioned, languishing ones — look out for them. It was like that in your day. You've forgotten. When you're young, you like to express yourself.'

A group of girls having dinner with Nora began to argue about the difference between a flirt and a coquette.

'A flirt,' ventured a precocious freshman, whose older brother was of the opinion that girls ought to learn to think and had accordingly presented his sister with a set of Shaw, 'a flirt is a woman who is willing to rouse a man's passion without being willing to satisfy it.'

The two older girls blushed beyond their rouge.

In this post-war era men flocked to Petersfield from all the colleges for week-end visits. A man with a car speeded over the roads from Boston to Petersfield as a relief from mental fatigue. The campus was like a country fair. The visitors needed no special entertainment. Roller-skating had become a fad among the girls. A youth, therefore, roller-skated, hand in hand with his lady-love, who, if she were a stalwart maiden, could hold him up while he was learning to balance himself. There were bicycle races on the college walks, and Miss Steele was almost run down. Most of the faculty went into retirement during this frightful week-end period. Even the country roads were no longer peacefully secluded. Youth was an athletic generation with

tireless legs. The week-enders explored the countryside. A girl, walking with her visitor's arm tossed carelessly over her shoulder as they trudged along, was a frequent faculty vision of horror. There were picnics in one's secret haunts — droves of them. Margaret Abington gave up her walks with Nora. But Nora could only be thankful all this hadn't come in her day. Then, men visited Petersfield for proms or to announce their engagements. Other times one had peace. For the girls without swains to exhibit, this new order necessitated advertising one's failure to attract men. Nora watched the female squads doing everything together, pretending to be superior to these ruddy boys in knickerbockers, but looking over their shoulders at them just the same.

Ruth Ewing insisted from the first that the new ways were better. Her students told her about the violent arguments they had with their masculine week-enders about the war, which had touched none of them, so they could talk; about the present Administration and its shameful attitude toward the League of Nations. World affairs were vital to the best of these girls. They were arranging debates with the men's colleges. The Oxford debaters were coming to Petersfield to cross swords with them next year. It was wonderful. In November a conference on social questions was to be held at the college, with delegates from the men's colleges as well as the women's.

Through all this revolution, however, the faculty was unchanged. The feeble representation of men had not

increased. What men there were seemed more old-maidish than the women, with minds far inferior. Many were there, Nora suspected, because they couldn't compete with men in the men's colleges. The curriculum, too, was just the same, even though the President announced that the colleges since the war were attracting a new type of girl, formerly confined to the finishing schools. But courses in household arts, by which this society type might be benefited, had not been provided. When faculty discussions touched upon the necessity, Miss Steele fought against such innovations. Petersfield was a college of arts. Let these frivolous creatures who lowered academic standards go to an institute for domestic science. The number of girls entering teaching had also declined. But the old training for a pedagogical career was still the backbone of the college.

Nora going down to New York twice a week, spending Saturday in the Knickerbocker library, in the moments snatched for contemplation pondered over what she could do. On the train travelling back and forth she went over this huge problem. The old traditions and ideals were gone. What was to take their place?

Her ambition for the students who crowded her courses was to give them an understanding of the impartial mind, how one got it, what results it gained. She tried to show them the confused, wasted world into which their youth had been born; she put before them their special problems and responsibilities. She talked

about the international point of view, read them the preface to the new Shaw play which had appeared that summer; 'The Wicked Half-Century,' 'War Delirium,' 'The Long Arm of War,' 'The Sufferings of the Sane,' 'How the Fools Shouted the Wise Men Down.' But while she read, she was conscious of the daily press in the fall of 1920, with its headlines trumpeting the hunting down of dangerous 'aliens and radicals,' terms largely synonymous, the deportation of harmless foreigners, and the madness of Americanization propaganda. What difference did her poor feeble words make?

But she continued to remind the girls that studies in history, unless one first tried to be impartial, were a pure waste of time. Go into something else. The classics or a new language. Mathematics.

The descendants of the Socialist League of Nora's day were now concentrated upon the Russian Soviets. They looked to the radical history instructor, Miss Deming, as a patroness for the cause of real freedom.

'But are your Bolshevists really giving Russia freedom?' she demanded the day she was asked to address a meeting. 'Isn't this a new form of tyranny?'

Her audience looked at her, their courtesy fighting against hostility. She was evidently like all the rest of the faculty, blind to the beauty and tragedy of Russia, struggling against her old shackles. She had deceived them with her animated talk.

Miss Steele told Nora she was becoming an excellent teacher. 'I don't know what you're doing with them,'

she said. 'But they're interested — stirred up. I hear them talking. You're waked up yourself, Nora. Your trips to New York — the University — it won't let you get stale.'

So the winter passed.

II

One night Margaret Abington knocked at Nora's door. She came in, and lay down on her couch, utterly exhausted.

'It's the weather,' Nora said. 'The first of spring. I feel tired, too, these days.'

Margaret said nothing.

'I wonder,' she murmured half to herself, 'if it's worth while going on. One always feels sure the next thing will be better.'

She rose slowly, paused at Nora's door, her fingers playing with the knob. Her face wore its characteristic twisted, tortured smile.

'You're so strong, Nora,' she said. 'So — so firm and courageous. If I ——' She stopped, looked back at Nora, and was gone.

Late the next afternoon word got around that Miss Abington was missing. She had not come down to breakfast, but that was not unusual. At luncheon she was still gone. Nora went up to her room. It was empty. A search was begun. Nora was questioned.

'Did she seem pessimistic?' they asked her.

'No more than usual.'

'You noticed nothing? What she said?'

'She so often says queer things — when she's tired.'

Not until the next day did they find her. A farmer three miles beyond the college saw a hat floating down the swollen stream which ran through his property. She had been dead some time when they took her out of the water. Not far away was a basket weighted down with stones holding the bodies of her two cats. She had not been willing to leave them behind her.

In all the sad arrangements Nora and her friends had to make during the next days, they found Margaret Abington's life singularly solitary. She had provided for no disposal of her possessions, even her paintings. Some wealthy distant cousins near Boston to whom Nora wrote felt outraged that the Abington name had been dragged into the newspapers. They had no suggestions to make about her pictures. They did not care for the kind of thing she did. They had been collecting Gainsboroughs for years and were now started on Romneys. It was clear enough from their letters that they had never given their gifted cousin a penny to help her along with her work nor the blessed boon of a little leisure.

Miss Abington's canvases became the possession of the college, all but the picture of the flowers growing in the fisherman's doorway, which went to Nora. And to the fall exhibition, arranged in the art lecture room, fashionable and artistic New York crowded. Miss Abington had made Petersfield famous. The President

was very much pleased. He immediately forgot that he had never cared for Miss Abington. He thought of himself now as the guardian of a sacred shrine. For the pictures, which the critics tardily praised, he conceived the idea of a beautiful gallery where the best of contemporary paintings should be gathered. He came out in the New York papers, called on art patrons, and wrote impressive letters to wealthy men. In a few months he announced to the college that the art building was assured.

That the name of one so shrinking and unassuming should be tossed about by the daily press and the college generally was unendurable to Nora. Fame for a talent so delicate must be clean and pure. Nora saw it besmirched by the stupidity of the rabble. In Margaret's lifetime a select company had appreciated her. She had had no mercy for fools. Now she was defenceless against the enthusiasm of the loquacious dilettante. Nora could not bear it. She kept away from the art lecture room, avoided the sight of Margaret's successor, a hard, confident young person who talked about pictures as if she were trying to sell them.

Margaret — the dear companion, so tortured by her own fastidious nature, so affectionate with her friends, so fierce against the rest of the world — Nora would keep for herself. She no longer mentioned Margaret's name.

There was plenty to do. As an ambitious historian of nineteenth-century England, she was now devoting

most of her time to the eighteenth century, and had begun her book, 'England on the Eve of the Industrial Revolution.' The making of a book after long stretches of teaching, with the frequent trips to New York on stray half-days to use the University library, the painful adjustments of the mind from the classroom to writing and back again, was a tortuous undertaking. Nora thought late at night as she worked of scholars all over the world who have brought forth their ideas with an even greater fight against unfavorable odds. The luxuries of ease and an untroubled mind — they were unknown to the brotherhood of poor scholars. Brotherhood of poor scholars — the phrase running through her weary head brought cool draughts of refreshment. All those who had something within them — like poor Margaret — how they suffered in the pangs of creation! The chips of Nora's labor she gave to her students. She also took them into her confidence about her speculations, her perplexities, tried to have them see how difficult it was to be honest, intelligent, fair, and at the same time how beautiful were these virtues of learning. Some of them caught her meaning.

III

Five years of toil. There is nothing to say about it. You read for five years, think, write, destroy everything you have done the first, perhaps the second year; and possibly at the end, if you have kept your head and your health, you have written a book which is worth

the reading. Just that, Nora estimated, was her history between the ages of twenty-five and thirty.

But the book was done. Nora had spent her thirtieth birthday typing the last of it. Miss Steele went around with a challenging air pronouncing it the best piece of scholarship done by an American woman, or a British woman, she often added. No one dared to contradict her. But Miss Steele at last was beginning to show signs of age. Nora discerned a tendency in her to emotionalize those whom she had once regarded with a chill justice, and the praise of her old teacher had its sting of pain. Professor Nicholson, who was urging the necessity of sending so promising a young scholar to England to get a really big piece of work started, regarded this first book as merely a respectable beginning. It was all his management, of course, that the fellowship from Knickerbocker University came to Nora. She was amused that Petersfield should consider her a remarkable person, and that her students should offer their congratulations with humble awe.

IV

After a tiresome afternoon spent conferring with her publishers, Nora went to Helen Spring's apartment for a quiet week-end. She and Helen were lounging in front of the fire after dinner, with no other light in the room. A knock at the door.

'Bother,' said Helen.

She opened the door, standing there a minute in

silence, staring at her visitor. 'Why, it's Zoe Ryder!' she exclaimed. 'I didn't recognize you at first.'

Nora turned on the lights. A pale, very thin woman dropped down, breathless, on Helen's couch. 'It must be five or six years since I've seen you,' Nora remarked, trying to conceal her shock at the change which had come over Zoe. A kind of decay had settled over the former Southern gentility, as if poor Zoe had been dragged through a miry way in her troubles.

'You were expecting me?' Zoe gasped. 'I followed the marks. I was so relieved when I saw it was your house, Helen.'

'The marks?'

Zoe pulled off a little black hat and patted her short brown hair, heavily streaked with grey. 'At first I was scared when I saw them on my doorstep. A big letter *F* in chalk. It's that gang following me again, I thought.' Zoe's large blue eyes regarded first Helen seated beside her on the couch, then Nora before the fire. Nora observed their restless glitter. 'Another of their tricks. But something just made me follow them. You know how it is. Something inside pushing you to do things. The arrows at the corner — it was easy — and then following the lines — they brought me right here.'

'But we don't know anything about the marks,' Helen protested.

Zoe paid no attention. She sat, her hands clasping her knees, looking abstractedly at something in front of her. 'They've done enough. Fed on me — ruined a

good business.' The gentle voice became shrill, then subsided, and returned to the old girlish animation Nora remembered. 'You never came to my tea-room, Helen. It was so cute. Of course I didn't have any money. I took down the doors and made them into tables, stuck candles in the holes where the knobs had been. I called it the "Devil's Kitchen" ——'

Nora and Helen looked at each other.

'It was all written up in the newspapers. In two of them. I cooked everything myself — fried the chicken — made the chocolate cake — the first night went off wonderfully. I even had drinks — to advertise the tea-room, you know.'

'And you've made a success of it?' Helen inquired.

'The first week I had crowds every night.' Zoe's aged face had in flashes the fire of youth. 'The real people — writers, the theatre crowd, artists. And that gang — they all had titles — foreigners. The Baron was Russian. Pole maybe. I can't remember. He brought the others. They kept saying they'd pay and then ate off me every night. Imposing on a woman that way! And noisy when they were drunk — it scared off the others. I don't blame them.'

Zoe's narrative — broken off with this strange, inconsequential anger against some one — the gang it was, Nora remembered. It sounded like madness. And yet Zoe, perched lightly on the edge of Helen's couch, was so small and harmless, so much, Nora had always felt, like a fluttering ground bird, with a silly ambition some-

times for the sky. Helen sat regarding Zoe with her kind, amused eyes.

'Why did you feed those men?' Nora demanded indignantly.

'They just ordered things. Nobility — all of them. Just helped themselves to the drinks until they were all gone. And the trouble to get hootch now ——'

Zoe, with her soft voice and helpless air, in league with bootleggers and a debauched alien crowd — the word 'hootch' crashing into her old-fashioned Virginia speech — was this really Zoe sitting there?

'My dear,' drawled Zoe, 'I never knew there were such people in the world. After I'd trusted them ——' Her innocent round blue eyes with the deep circles looked up at Nora. 'I know now. It was a gang that feeds off people — off women. They won't work. Just drinking ——'

Zoe wandered in her narrative. But in the end of a long description of the troubled fortunes of the tea-room, she came at last to its sudden end, the doors closed, no more possible credit.

'Even then the Baron came,' she went on. 'Walked right in. "I'm hungry," he said. "You've eaten up all I've got," I told him. "There's nothing left." "I'm going to make myself some tea." And, my dear, he walked right out into the kitchen and got tea for himself.'

'You ought to've called the police,' Helen said.

But Zoe for some reason had no confidence in the pro-

tecting arm of the law. She shrank away from Helen's suggestion, as if wincing before a blow. With a few sticks of furniture rescued from the tea-room she had sought refuge in the attic of a feather factory as a hiding-place from the gang, of which she lived in daily dread.

'I didn't even have a bed,' Zoe continued plaintively. 'I told my friends ——' In all of Zoe's troubles, when she tried to borrow money, she spoke largely of those mysterious devoted beings always ready to come to her aid. 'They began sending me cots. One after another. I lost count of them. They were just lined up ——' She laughed as she stretched out her hands to indicate an infinity of beds. This light, untroubled laughter as she described that terrible refuge — what — what had come to Zoe to change her like this? Nora's imagination leaped to a succession of vivid, unmentionable horrors.

Zoe went on. Even in this rude shelter above the feather factory, consisting sometimes of one room, sometimes of four in Zoe's uncertain recital, the Baron hunted her down. He declared he would freeze on the streets if she didn't take him.

'I had such a nice fireplace,' she boasted. 'And I picked up wood everywhere. He lay right down on the floor in front of my fire. He had a terrible cough. Honestly, girls, he was very ill. I couldn't ——'

She had made up a bed for the Baron out of her superfluous store of cots, covered him with some old clothes, nursed his cold. But as soon as he was well, he

went out and brought back the gang to occupy the rest of the cots stacked up in the attic.

Helen accepted even this last revelation quietly, with all that one could imagine from Zoe's dark hints, the loft of the feather factory with its disreputable nightly crew presided over by a worn, emaciated Zoe. Did Zoe know what she was saying? Couldn't Helen stop this mad tale? Surely all this flimsy, impossible horror was the work of a sick mind. But Helen's calm face seemed to inspire Zoe to go on.

'Carrying on — stamping up my stairway — there wasn't even a lock to my door. I'd lie there scared almost to death ——' Zoe's skinny little shoulders shook. 'It was terrible — just terrible.' Her voice had the chirp of an insect trying to announce a tragedy.

Zoe came home one afternoon and found a crowd gathering around the back door leading to her attic. Two policemen stood over something on the stairs. Zoe stepped up beside them. She displayed a dainty pride as she described her important part in the drama.

'There was the Baron. He'd got some feathers out of one of the factory bags. He was all rolled up in feathers. Just his head sticking out. Like an enormous bird.' Zoe began to laugh at the memory. Helen and Nora, not knowing what else to do, joined her.

'Such language. And right before a lady.' Zoe had a slight lisp in moments of stress. 'He was so drunk he — they wanted to carry him off. But I couldn't have that. I told them he was a relative. I'd be responsible

for him.' Again Nora observed Zoe's unaccountable satisfaction, as if she had performed some glorious deed.

But after Zoe had got the Baron up to the attic, she had herself taken flight. Since then she had lived in a room not far from Helen, in daily dread that the gang would discover her.

'I've found out about them now,' she said. 'They collect around the Square. They pick out their victims and then — I don't dare go out except after dark to get something to eat. I never go to the door. My friends ring three times. Remember, three times. If they found where I was ——'

Zoe rambled on a little more, going back over parts of her story, exclaiming at intervals, 'My dear, I never knew there were such people in the world.'

Suddenly she seemed to remember a pressing engagement, jumped up, and left, saying once more, 'Ring three times. I'm always home.'

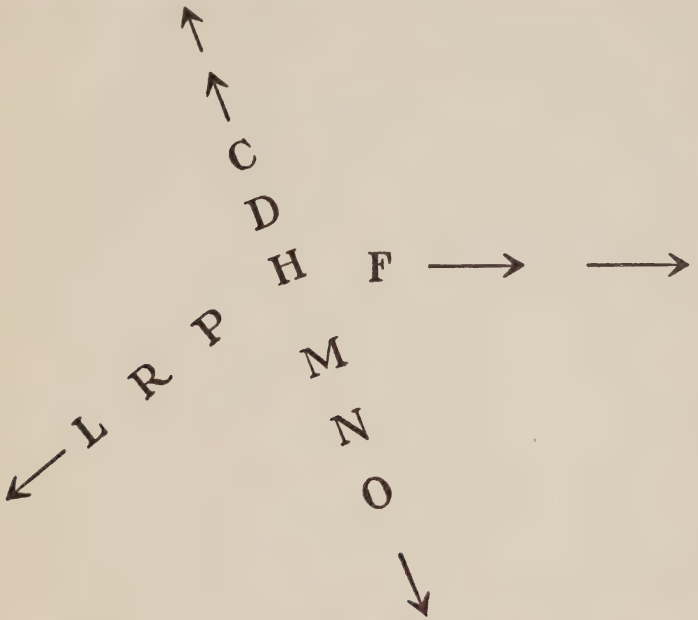
She was gone, and Helen and Nora were looking at each other.

'It's all like a hideous nightmare that you can't shake off,' Nora said, her voice husky.

'Something has happened to her. Drugs maybe,' Helen speculated. 'But that old obsession of hers ——'

How much of this tale of terror was true, how much built up with the aid of Zoe's sick mind, it was impossible to tell. They compared their impressions, went over the details once more, but there seemed no immediate solution.

Finally they went downstairs. Stooping they made out the letter *F* in chalk on the outer steps. At the nearest corner, they found a chalk diagram.



The arrows leading from the letter *F* pointed toward their house. They followed the arrows for a few blocks, found them radiating in all directions, in a perplexing maze.

'Some new Village game,' Nora ventured. 'A party, perhaps — a treasure hunt. These novelty-seekers would hit on something like this.'

Whatever it was, however, it had brought Zoe to Helen's.

'And I didn't even dare offer to help her,' Helen remembered, when they had returned to Helen's sitting-room. 'She's borrowed money from every one she knew. It's two years since any one I know has seen her.'

They made inquiries among Zoe's old circle, but no one had heard of her. At the address she gave even three rings at the door failed to bring Zoe.

'Well,' Helen remarked, when Nora was starting back to Petersfield Sunday night, 'you've seen all my menagerie the years you've been around New York. I guess Zoe's the last of them, Nora. Your work's about finished. I've done my best for you — Amelia — Vicky — Zoe — I don't believe I can give you any more.'

'You've done very well by me, Helen.'

'Kept you from too dull a diet — the university and the normal academic mind —— Well, you're the only one of us that's come to anything. And yet we've sneered at your sanity behind your back, Nora. I can tell you now.'

V

Nora stood in a long procession of men and women receiving degrees from Knickerbocker University. She marched up to the high platform, heard a few words mumbled over her, and was soon back in her seat. The end, so long delayed by teaching, by her own stumbling in by-paths, by her intellectual insecurity, was reached at last. In the crowded amphitheatre, she sensed what a big American university, so formless and destitute of

charm or emotion, had given her. In these striving years, shut off from much of what men experienced in the rubbing together of the best minds, she was carrying away intellectual gains which Petersfield could never have offered her.

After all, it was the universities like Knickerbocker which represented the best American life could deliver, the safest places to breed the ideas which would become the popular possession of the next age. The universities were far from perfect — she was ready to admit, but no institution of learning can be far above the society which supports it. Idealists had laid heavy charges against Knickerbocker University: the creaking machinery, the officers who placed immediate well-being before the ultimate good, the dull professors, the dead scholarship. Many of these evils existed in all the universities. But there was the other side. Where did all the scornful critics who saw no virtue in American learning get their ideals — their first spark? At a university. Some professor. Some other student. Perhaps both. Then they grew up, went away, and belabored the place which prepared them to walk without leading strings.

Crossing the square in front of the library, escaping from the multitude of Commencement Day, Nora experienced a prolonging of her elated mood. She reviewed swiftly the books she knew written by the men of Knickerbocker. In most of them one found honesty, patient toil, the absence of charlatanism. And in the best there was brilliance and a safe start for a new

generation of scholars. The great need was more time — more time to think. 'Ripeness is all,' wise Shakespeare had said. More time, more leisure, peace, no worry about money — but all this is the heaven of which the tired scholar dreams.

Ruth Ewing was waiting for Nora on the corner. 'I'm so sorry. I couldn't get in to see your little show for the crowd.' She kissed Nora. 'What shall we do now?'

'I've meant to do it for months. I've never had the time. I'm going to have my hair cut off,' Nora said.

'My dear!' protested her friend.

'Come along.' Nora put a firm hand on Ruth's arm. 'My mind's all made up.'

'Miss Steele will be furious,' Ruth persisted, but Nora only laughed and dragged her forward.

Nora gazed at a shorn head in the barber's mirror. 'Very nice, Miss,' a dark little man was saying.

Ruth Ewing was examining her not entirely with disapprobation. 'I wish Margaret could see you, Nora.'

Nora continued to study the reflection in the mirror. The line of her head in back, the sweep of hair over her forehead, broad and clean-cut — yes, it all went with her slender, boyish figure.

'They won't take you seriously at first over there in England,' laughed Ruth. 'How you'll fool them, my dear.'

Years had dropped from Nora, and most of her dignity. At this climax in her academic honors, she had

never seemed more lightly touched by time. This was the way to start marching over the stretch between thirty and forty. Thirty-one years old. A woman ready to face the world for the first time. The best of life beginning; of that she felt sure. Intelligence ripens slowly, gives its best only after long and weary waiting. But she was ready, at last, to see what she could do.

'Ruth,' Nora called out, 'let's take the first train to Petersfield and show Miss Steele. Of course she'll be furious. I want to hear her rage.' She slid out of the barber's chair, her eyes seeking once more the trim, smiling girl in the mirror.

PART IV

Mount Latmos

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Mount Latmos

CHAPTER I

I

A park, a lake, a red pillar box, a postman on a bicycle wearing a funny flat helmet, a tall iron fence with an opening through which the taxi passed. Nora had arrived at Saint Ethelfreda College in London. It was exactly what an English college should be: red brick covered with ivy, a stretch of that vivid green grass one always suspected on postcards, and flowers, actually the snapdragons which since Newman's 'Apologia' one expected to find in English college gardens. The maid at the door, with her crisp cap and apron and stiffly starched movements, was a perfect specimen of the English servant, like those in the novel Nora had read on the boat coming over.

'Miss Talbot is expecting you, Miss. Won't you step this way, Miss?'

Nora was ushered into a large room, very chilly and damp even the first week of October, with all of the windows opening out into the pleasant garden. A small, brown-haired woman, the resident tutor, Miss Talbot, rose to shake hands with Miss Deming, the pupil of that unusual woman, Professor Steele, who had visited Saint Ethelfreda.

Miss Talbot was all smiles, too many of them. Nora wished that the resident tutor's habit of cocking her head on one side like a robin and opening her blue eyes very wide did not tempt her to laughter. On the way to her room Nora was introduced to several severe-looking women in college gowns who must be dons. They didn't seem to recognize the American's donnishness. Evidently short hair didn't impress the English as a sign of a highly developed intellect.

The room set aside for the new American student was delightful, with windows overlooking the garden and the park beyond, where through the trees Nora could see sheep grazing. A fireplace and a scuttle of coals. The delights of an open fire would be hers. A desk near the window, a big armchair, a couch with an India print cover — everything most comfortable surely. A knock at the door, and the maid she had seen downstairs entered.

'I trust everything's all right, Miss. You want a bit of fire? London is damp to the Americans, we find. We've had American young ladies here before, Miss. I always take care of them.'

The maid, whose name was Clara, made Nora feel apologetic for her careless, undistinguished American speech.

'Now,' Clara went on, when the coals began to burn, 'I'm going to bring up your tea. Miss Talbot said I might. I said you'd be tired after the weary journey up to London.'

At the sound of the dinner bell the Saint Ethelfreda students gathered in the chilly common room. Miss Talbot hurriedly introduced Nora to the gaunt young woman beside her.

'Miss South from New Zealand. Like two colonials, really.'

Nora looked at Miss South. Then her glance travelled to a girl standing apart from the others, a girl with heavy black hair held by a large jewelled pin, and deeply circled eyes, her wrinkled dress in startling contrast to the English, all correctly attired for a formal eight o'clock dinner.

'Mademoiselle Lafleur, your next-door neighbor,' murmured Miss Talbot.

The French girl's tragic eyes lighted up for a moment. Miss Talbot put out a stiff arm through which she slipped her hand, Nora was seized by the New-Zealander, and a long procession of dons and students, two by two, marched into the hall.

The dining-hall soared into heights of new oak imitating some Elizabethan pattern, Nora suspected, and the girls seated at the rows of tables appeared insignificant in the vastness of space over them.

Nora's neighbors ate steadily and swiftly, talking very little. All of them had red cheeks. Like Peggotty's in 'David Copperfield,' as brilliant as a red velvet pincushion. Nora had heard about English complexions. It was the dampness, which at the moment hung like a grey cloud around the chandeliers suspended from the

lofty ceiling, now obscured. These girls were so bony, too. Their arms, their necks, their cheeks. Not one morsel of superfluous flesh.

From across the table she caught the word hockey — the hockey matches. Hockey, not yet introduced at Petersfield, had already invaded some of the American colleges, Nora told them.

'It's a topping game,' ventured a quiet little girl with a shy smile. 'Topping.'

Miss Talbot rose, Mademoiselle Lafleur took her arm, and the procession marched back to the common room. The solemnity of the ceremony was really delicious. The English girls began passing coffee. It was vile. One sip almost choked Nora. She saw the French girl slide her cup under the sofa. The dons, raw-boned and talking hockey, took two cups.

Nora, back in her room, closed the windows to shut out the clammy chill of English air, and shook some coal over the fire. The common room had kept the shivers chasing up and down her backbone.

A knock on her door. A girl who looked like Fuzzy Leland at Petersfield, but much taller and thinner, entered.

'Won't you come to cocoa at ten o'clock?' she said. 'In my room at the end of the corridor.'

Petersfield all over again. Even to night feeds. But something hot to drink would be grateful before getting into bed. The sheets were always damp. Some one on the boat had warned her never to sleep in an English

bed without slipping a watch between the sheets to see if the glass got damp. But if it did, what next? Nora decided it was more comfortable not to know too much about the sheets.

In the tall girl's room — Sheldon her name was, and English girls called one another by last names just like boys — five girls sat on the floor in front of a bright fire. They were very friendly to the strange American, but they didn't talk much. Long — long pauses. The cocoa made a comforting warm trickle down Nora's clammy interior.

In bed that night Nora prayed that she wouldn't have to live her freshman year over again at thirty-one. It would be worse than reincarnation. Those cocoa parties! Professor Steele was responsible for her coming to Saint Ethelfreda. She had selected Miss Talbot as a reliable care-taker for her dear pupil. Nora had counted on cheap lodgings near the British Museum and the School of Economics before Miss Steele got started on the lurid horrors of an unheated room, or at best one with a reeking gas-fire, presided over by a slatternly landlady. She also preached to Nora the duty of studying English university women at first hand. Her pupil, with her deceptive youth, would be accepted as one of the girls and could find out if they, in spite of their seriousness, were any cleverer than the frivolous American girl who had brains, even while she concealed them.

So here Nora was. Her room was very still. She could hear the ducks on the lake and the striking of a

church bell. Saint Ethelfreda College, after a cocoa party, had betaken itself to slumber or to study, instead of conversing loudly in the corridors, romping and squealing in the Petersfield fashion. An American had to admit that the English respected quiet.

At breakfast Annette Lafleur slipped into the vacant chair beside Nora. All around her sat the English girls fresh from a morning tub, their hair brushed back into a tight bun in a straight line with their shiny noses. The French girl wore the tumbled dress of the night before. The jewelled pin, which still upheld her sable coils, had an uncertain, trembling tilt. Beside the snappy alertness of her neighbors, she looked as if she had passed a troubled, sleepless night. She stirred a cup of tea languidly, and looked around her. The English were quietly consuming frightful quantities of porridge.

Opposite Nora sat the same quiet little hockey enthusiast to whom Nora had spoken at dinner. She came from Dorsetshire, and her name by some strange twist was Dorset, Lucy Dorset.

'Going to play in the match Saturday, Dorset?' called out the cocoa-party hostess of the night before.

'Hockey — always that hockey,' muttered the French girl. She turned to Nora. 'I want to talk to you about America. Some day soon? This afternoon maybe? I know many Americans.'

Nora and the New-Zealander walked through the park after breakfast, the feeble sun lighting up the brown of the London trees and the red buses lumbering

past them. Miss South leaped on to the proper bus, Nora clumsily catching on behind her.

At the British Museum they passed the guardian policemen at the outer gate, the sight-seers already assembling, and the guards within. The signatures of the Saint Ethelfreda officers gave Nora immediate access to the reading-room sanctities.

'That much done,' sighed Miss South, leading the way to University College and then to the School of Economics to arrange about lectures.

On her return, Nora knocked on the door next to hers. Mademoiselle Lafleur, wrapped in a big white shawl, was leaning over a cold grate rubbing her hands together.

'Haven't you lit your fire yet?' Nora asked.

The French girl shook her head. In the centre of the mantel shelf above her was a little shrine covered with gaily colored silk for a picture of Napoleon as a young man, draped with the tricolor. Beside him nodded two white carnations in a tipsy little vase. Mademoiselle Lafleur observed the direction of Nora's gaze.

'The Savior of France,' she said. 'I pray for the coming of his successor to save my poor country. A strong man ——'

'I think a descendant of the Napoleon family lives in America.' Nora was conscious of the inappropriateness of her matter-of-fact tone. 'At least I have a vague memory ——'

'If it could be a ruler with Napoleon's blood,' sighed Annette Lafleur.

When Nora suggested tea in her room in front of a blazing fire, the great melancholy eyes lit up with a faint ray of response. The sight of Clara bringing in a tray with an abundance of bread and butter, damson preserves, plum cake, and tea for two hungry people, changed her into an eager and normal girl.

'Beautiful — beautiful.'

'I'm going to start calling you Annette immediately,' announced Nora, pouring out fragrant hot tea from a squatty brown earthenware teapot. 'And please call me Nora.'

'With pleasure — Nora.' Annette laughed over her clumsy fumbling with the name. 'To escape "Mademoiselle." Mademoiselle — Mademoiselle with these English from morning until night. Like a servant. It is horrible. Miss — Miss — how would they suffer it?' Annette began to drink her tea, her chair up close to the comforting flames.

Annette began to question her new friend eagerly about the United States. She had met American boys during the war. When the big trucks stopped in front of her country home and the soldiers tried to buy gasoline, she, the only member of her family speaking English, had to talk to them. She had begun filling a note-book with her observations of American men. To draw them out, she made a list of questions.

'"Do you believe in Platonic love?" That was one of my questions,' Annette said, looking at Nora with a triumphant and superior air. 'And always the young

American man said yes, he believed in Platonic love.'

'Of course,' Nora agreed.

'Then I decided the American young man is remarkable. Now the Frenchman — of course I love my countrymen best — but no Frenchman believes in Platonic love. And the Englishman — but they are too cold — too frozen to believe in anything about love. The Englishman — I hate that kind of man.'

Nora had hoped there wouldn't be another cocoa party that night. But there was. This time Annette was invited. Cocoa parties were absolutely new in her experience. She sat perched on a stool before her hostess's fire staring around her, a quizzical wonder in her eloquent eyes.

In Nora's room afterward she went off into spasms of amusement. 'I shall write home,' she snorted. 'Cocoa — cocoa party.' In her mocking tones the words sounded very ridiculous. 'Oh, my God!' Annette threw herself face downward on Nora's couch.

The French girl interspersed all her remarks with free translations of her *mon Dieu*. They flavored her speech like red pepper. Of course the English girls were shocked by her 'My God,' which snapped out like a firecracker.

But even more startling was the American student's announcement that she was taking lectures at the School of Economics. None of them went down there. Somehow it seemed outside the pale of respectability, an un-English place, they had been told. It also brought back too vivid memories of that recent shameful but

mercifully brief period when a Labor Government had ruled England, and a coal-miner had donned satin breeches to bow before the King. There seemed to be no radicals at Saint Ethelfreda.

II

Down in the visitors' room, located with the assistance of Clara, Nora found Ellen Powys. Ellen, very fresh and lovely, with the pink bloom of her new home, looked very English in her broad-brimmed hat, tweed costume, homespun scarf, and chamois gloves.

'I've come to carry you home with me for tea,' she said, enfolding Nora in a warm embrace. She looked around the bare little room with its hissing gas-fire. 'Isn't this the quaintest place? Like an inquisitorial chamber. And I walked through miles and miles of halls to find it.'

Ellen was the mother of four substantial British subjects, waiting to be displayed to Mummy's American friend in a big cheerful nursery, presided over by a Scotch nurse; two boys and two girls, the youngest a babe of three months. They were beautiful and blond like their parents, with firm hard legs like pillars. Even the small baby promised a stalwart robustness.

'You see,' explained Ellen, as they drove away in her two-seater, 'I'm not clever like Michael. So I took to the baby business. All we can hope is that the children will inherit their father's brains.'

On Sunday Nora went a second time to the Powys's

Kensington flat, where Michael's friends working with him on the paper and a pleasant mixture of other people dropped in for supper.

Michael had the same beautiful radiance, but he looked more substantial, and his enthusiasms were tempered by a sobriety and humor which he had not yet developed in his Petersfield days.

'I expected you'd get over,' Michael said to Nora. 'I hope we can be some help to you, Ellen and I. We'll do what we can.'

The guests began to arrive rapidly. They were gayer than Nora had anticipated, with a careless and informal kindness to the American stranger unlike the studied benevolence of Saint Ethelfreda. In their talk, glancing over various employments and avocations, there was none of that veneration for the arts which characterizes the outsider. Most of them, it appeared, had a recognized place in a chosen craft.

'Jolly piece of acting you put on last week, Jerry.' A stout man expanding beyond the confines of his dinner jacket nodded toward an Irish boy stretched out on the floor before the fire.

'And a jolly bit of writing you spun out for me in "The Londoner,"' the actor rejoined. 'It was kind of you, Norris.'

'The honest overflow of a disciplined heart,' laughed the other.

Supper was handed out informally to the guests, who stood around in groups balancing plates or sought quiet

corners. Nora found herself in a window-seat between an elderly woman whose studio overlooked Hammersmith Bridge and a young journalist who was trying between assignments to write a great novel on the war. Others joined them, talked to Nora, drifted away. Ellen brought up a few people to be introduced to Nora, but she left her guests largely to themselves.

It was the most delightful evening Nora had yet spent in England. She leaped on a bus at a near-by corner, with a new affection for London and for old friends. At the edge of the park near the college gates, she passed two policemen.

'Good evening, Miss,' they said with a warming politeness.

Yes, London was a charming place. She sped along, the church bell striking, striking. It must be midnight. She reached the college gates. They were closed. She tried to pull them open. She strained against them. No response. They were locked. The porter's lodge on the other side was in darkness. She looked around. No one was in sight. She examined the gate. Yes, she could climb over it. She lifted her skirt, placed one foot on the first cross-piece, up and up, now over, and quickly climbed down the other side. Walking up the avenue of beech trees, casting long shadows over the driveway, she remembered that this was Sunday night, Sunday in England, church-going, propriety, a quiet evening at home. The college entrance was locked. Of course it would be. But a light in one of the first-floor windows

saved her. She crept over to it, called softly, and Willis, a very serious second-year girl, appeared at the window.

'I'm locked out,' Nora said.

'Of course. It's past midnight,' announced Willis.

'May I climb into your window?' The window-sill was close to the ground. The only difficulty was in leaping over the flower borders which stretched between.

'I oughtn't to let you,' scolded Willis. 'If you trample the flowers ——'

But Willis was so absorbed in higher mathematics that she had no desire to inquire into the American girl's irregularity. She said good-night chillily and went on with her work.

The next morning a note in Nora's post-office box summoned her to Miss Talbot's room. She knocked on what she thought was the proper door.

'Come in,' called a faint voice.

Miss Talbot was seated at the opposite end of her very long room in front of an official table.

'Will you please go around to the other door,' suggested Miss Talbot, 'and not tramp through my sitting-room?' Nora looked around her, backed out of the room, and found a door marked 'Office.' Evidently, Miss Talbot's room possessed a public and a private entrance.

Nora stood in front of the official table, Miss Talbot not asking her to be seated.

'I am informed that you were not in the college at

closing time last night, Miss Deming. Your entrance later needs some explanation.'

'I — I didn't know — that the gates were locked. When I returned ——' Nora felt the black guilt of a small child unable to make the proper explanation to his elders.

'You did not consult me about any evening engagement, Miss Deming.'

'You mean that I — if I go out evenings ——'

'Every resident in this college makes no engagement without consulting me,' Miss Talbot declared.

'I — I didn't know,' Nora faltered.

'Oh.' Into Miss Talbot's exclamation one could read almost anything.

Outside the inquisitorial chamber, Nora realized that Miss Talbot was ignorant of her academic standing in her own country, her age, her years of independence. She must go back and explain. But something held her outside Miss Talbot's door. Why should she live in this English college without the restrictions of the other students, free of the shackles which held them? The girls had accepted her as one of them. She would not spoil the naturalness of her position.

Her heart still beat with enraged thumps. Her cheeks burned. She remembered now the rancor the young suffer against restraint. So this was what the English girls had to endure.

Annette was delighted at Nora's experience in bumping her head against the unyielding stone wall of a

British Sabbath. She, too, had suffered. But she had her peculiar kind of revenge. Whenever Miss Talbot appeared within her orbit, she muttered under her breath two phrases which she had found in Gaston Leroux: 'Smirking with the careful charm of a woman a little along in years who relies still on infantine graces,' and 'fat smile of importance,' which was even better.

The English girls called Miss Talbot 'Tabby,' and they resented her tyranny as much as did the two foreigners. None of them, however, dared to rebel. Poor Jonesie, an honors student in chemistry, always studying long after midnight, had asked for permission to go to a Bach concert.

'You will never distinguish yourself by running out at night like a servant girl,' pronounced Tabby icily.

Jones, on a scholarship and not far enough removed from the servant class to escape the sting in Tabby's words, had submitted to the decision.

'She's a tyrant,' one of Jonesie's champions said. 'It's power she loves. Poor Jonesie who gets dull working so hard ——'

'If one felt Tabby did it for our good. The way she grins when she says something nasty ——'

But Fairfield, a stubby girl from Cheshire, always defended Tabby. 'She's clever — awfully clever. You all know that.' No one disputed Fairfield. All of them had too many sore memories of Tabby's relentlessly powerful tongue. 'You've got to let Tabby have a little temperament,' she concluded.

Nora soon discovered that Fairfield was right. Tabby was so much more than a tyrant. At the International Dinner given at the Trafalgar Club, she overheard Miss Talbot talking to a distinguished Frenchman partly in French and partly in English in a brilliant fashion which she realized she at Tabby's age could never equal. In the candlelight, Tabby, with her firm white neck and shoulders, the brilliant green of her eyes, the delicately shifting color of her face intensified by the rose of her gown, was very handsome, one of the most notable women there. Only as the shades of Saint Ethelfreda drew around her did she become sharp and hard, ruling with a force which none dared question. She had two lives which never crossed each other.

III

Lucy wanted to be Nora's friend. She gave a light little knock on Nora's door, lingered over her fire, talked to her about Hardy, the Dorsetshire poet, whose verse stirred her, another Dorsetshire person, as nothing else had. Gradually she told more about herself. She came from a family whose ambition for her was success at the county balls. But she wasn't a success. She couldn't be. At dances her hair got wet and stringy. She knew she was awkward. And dancing made her tired — so very tired. She came to college to escape the county balls. Her father had been angry, her mother sad, at their daughter's failure. But she loved Saint Ethelfreda. And she loved hockey. Hardy and hockey — strange little Lucy.

One night she looked up at Nora with a bird-like glance from her footstool in front of the fire. 'Do you like Mademoiselle?' she asked. 'I've seen you talking to her.'

'I find her very interesting — very different,' Nora told her.

'I'm afraid I don't care for the French. We always have a French girl here at college. They seem very strange. Not like the English. I don't like people who are different. That's English, I suppose. We're narrow, you think?'

'But I'm different.'

'In such a nice way,' interrupted Lucy. 'You seem so friendly — easy to talk to. Really,' she added, the courage rising in the depths of scared, blue-green eyes.

There seemed no poetry in the English girls — except Lucy — no imagination. When Annette insisted upon reading aloud her latest discovery in English verse at the cocoa parties, reading it as it should be read — tenderly, with moments of fire, of passion, their red cheeks flushed carmine and they looked down toward their boots. They appeared proud of their lack of emotion, at least their concealment of it, of their regular and studious life at college. They expected to secure posts in a school, good ones if they got 'firsts' in the examinations, those eventful examinations, which, at the end of three years, decided their professional standing in life. To be successful students, they eliminated all vanity. Neatness, an almost oppressive soapy clean-

liness, they insisted upon, but scraped-back hair and dull woollen dresses under academic gowns were the marks of the serious university woman. They, the daughters of doctors, barristers, schoolmasters, and clergymen in provincial towns, had no curiosity about London. They laughed at the time Nora wasted with sight-seeing. They had been to the Tower and the Zoo. A few of the more spirited had visited Madame Tussaud's. When necessity took them to East London, they avoided buses which carried one relentlessly through miserable thoroughfares. They used the Underground, bolted out as quickly as they could, and didn't look around them. They felt a sense of good form in not staring at the misery of others. Out of kindness several of the older girls went with Nora to the City churches like Saint Bartholomew's, but they disapproved of her choosing a different one each Sunday. They hinted that it seemed too much like church sight-seeing. But Nora told them with a laugh that she was not above such ecclesiastical junketings.

All the political sense the female novelists gave to Englishwomen Nora never discovered at Saint Ethelfreda. Not one of them had attended a session of Parliament. There wasn't time. They couldn't understand politics. Conservative, Liberal — they left all that to their fathers. A government election the year before had started the college, so Maggs said, into staging a mock election, in which, even in play, most of Saint Ethelfreda had kept away from Labor. The few

votes given all came from day students, London girls, who sported with a mild radicalism. But never the residents from the provinces.

'Too stodgy and respectable,' declared Maggs, a new acquaintance of Nora's, who was Cockney to the marrow.

There were no Socialist Leagues, no arguments about the duty of bearing fatherless children, or of becoming sisters to the unwashed Bolshevists.

When Nora dropped in to visit the history seminars, she kept comparing the English and the American way. Petersfield played more lightly with the mind. It wasted time with college activities, but there was an intensity, an enlivening force in its best moments which she felt Saint Ethelfreda lacked. Here was the daily faithful application, the mature self-direction which flitting American girls seldom arrived at, the solid, honest accomplishment. Balance, restraint — these were the intellectual virtues of Saint Ethelfreda. But the ignorance of contemporary events, the indifference held the students in a sluggish theoretical backwater. They could not translate what they read into terms of the present. Yet was Petersfield any better? She was probably nursing romantic memories of her own college. All college women, possibly, were equally out of the world.

The brilliant students at University College and the School of Economics were generally men. Not all. The short-haired women with masculine dress and the prim

Quaker ladies with strong opinions she had met at Professor MacPherson's Sunday afternoon teas argued boldly about political philosophy with the Hindoos, the eager Jews, the Boer, the Canadians, a Siamese, the New-Zealanders, the Egyptian, the shabby Irish and English. Although they were solidly Labor, they represented delicate shades of distinction hard for an outsider like Nora to catch. Some of them were Fabians, much interested in the Fabian Kindergarten, instituted for the young and faltering in radical thought. Others were Guild Socialists ready to watch the spectacular downfall of the present capitalistic society almost any moment. When Nora carried back these prophecies to her own college, the chemistry don had laughed like a horse, throwing back her head, and screaming, 'What nonsense!' Others among Professor MacPherson's guests, merging Fabianism and Guild Socialism, represented the most subtle and tantalizing of thinkers. But none of them had the middle-class taboos of Saint Ethelfreda, with the belief in the necessity of respectability. How they despised Saint Ethelfreda! Those women!

Michael Powys's crowd, which Nora met almost every Sunday, were less statistical, less grubby. What brought all of them to Ellen's little drawing-room was their common belief that a man could be a painter or a journalist and at the same time hope that England could be made a less hopeless hole to live in. They wanted to reconstruct a society shattered by war and still, after eight years, sadly in pieces, so that one could

be spiritually comfortable while one fiddled in Queen's Hall or hurried off the last pages of proof. But all of this seriousness they concealed. To Nora the well-set-up and carefully finished young men were the most graceful product of British civilization. Their perfection of ease, the best American men never succeeded in giving the effect of such undesigned art. The women, young matrons like Ellen, with serene eyes and delicate flower-like bloom, lacked the nervous intensity which wore one out with American women.

But at ten o'clock the porter was beginning to lock the college gates, and Nora had to leave these delightful people warming up to their best conversation to return to another week of porridge, Tabby, and the dons, and table talk of hockey.

IV

London was now held fast in the grip of November fogs. The light October mists were only happy memories. Day after day, when Nora looked out of her window, even the nearest trees were hidden by greyish vapor, and the thick air made her eyes burn and her throat dry. Going to the Museum, she felt as if she were walking in her sleep as she passed from one choking area to another. The water on the pavements, the slimy streets, the sooty air made her spirits sink. She felt as if something were pushing her down to the pavement, and she would never be able to get up again.

In the reading-room the grey clouds floated up to the

lofty dome, dropping down upon the men and women huddled in their stalls, and giving to the benevolent attendants in skull caps imprisoned in a sacred inner circle the dark, forbidding obscurity of mischief-loving genii.

When she and Annette went to the theatre in Hammersmith, the fog, like pea-soup the British described it, was so dense that the policemen after the play escorted parties to the Underground. Along the edge of the park they felt their way, touching the iron palings of the fence for guidance. They heard voices near by, but could see no one.

When the fog lifted after five days and a convalescent sun glimmered weakly over the streets, Nora went to the Wallace gallery to see 'The Laughing Cavalier.' She found it an amusing pastime to move slowly away from the compelling smile of the merry gentleman in the painting to see how far it could follow her. Farther and farther away she went, the eyes pursuing her with their tantalizing gaiety. Suddenly the laughter was gone. She looked around her. The same pall had fallen over all the neighboring canvases — Reynolds, Gainsborough, Rembrandt, Titian, and the rest. The fog had returned and was rapidly filling the gallery. As she passed through the room full of old French clocks, all ticking away with different voices and rhythms in the dimness, they seemed to be closing in upon her, ticking, ticking, in her ears, all around her head, at her back, over her feet. She ran down the staircase to get away,

and out into the black chasms of Marylebone High Street.

The next day she was back in the B.M. She had been reading aimlessly for almost two months and had got nowhere. Nineteenth-century England stretched out greater and greater, vast unexplored spaces. One plunge seemed as sensible as another. It really made no difference. Sometimes she stayed away from the reading-room and from her lectures, but the weeks were slipping by, and she had done nothing. If she sat in that grey, airless tomb, an inspiration might suddenly come to her. She had a cold, and her hacking cough made the dried-up old woman in the chair next look up sharply from her copying. She reached in her bag, and brought out a box of lozenges.

'Here, take this,' she said crossly. Nora obediently swallowed one, and thanked her.

Another day Nora, writing hard on a new project for a book, toiled with a scratching pen. Screech — screech — it was annoying. Once more her neighbor regarded her with hostility. She handed Nora a thick blotter.

'I can't stand that pen of yours,' she scolded. 'You write on this.'

Four o'clock. Nora was accomplishing nothing. She would go back to college. She reached her room exhausted, her head aching, her neck stiff. As she sipped her tea in front of the fire, the pounding of heels in the hallway making throbs of pain shoot through her head, she knew that she hated everything at Saint Ethelfreda,

everything except Annette and Lucy and Maggs — and dear old Clara who made her fire and brought her beautiful tea every day. Tabby and the other dons — yes, she hated them. They had no feeling. They were so hard — hard. Was it being shut up in a college nunnery which made them like this? Would she — yes, she was afraid that some day she, too —— 'Consign me to the watery depths if I get that way,' she confided to her diary. 'Make me love the human race, O ye great powers of the universe.'

'I don't see how you can live this way,' protested Annette as she watched her friend start off after breakfast every morning. 'A system so unbending — I should die, Nora.'

She clapped her hands together for joy when Nora, after dinner, stretched out on her couch, with Annette and Lucy for an audience, before the fire, cursed the B.M. and all the diabolical realms of scholarship.

'You Americans are delightful!' cried Annette. 'So — so complicated. Going off to the B.M. with that bag after breakfast. That Nora, I say — she cares only for books and for working. But now you are delightful — delightful, Nora.' She rushed over and kissed her friend on both cheeks.

But Lucy was shaking her head. Lucy's main regret was that she had wasted most of her youth with the county balls. 'You don't know, Nora. You've done so much. And I — I must work every minute now to make up for all the time I lost. Books — books. I can

never get enough. There's nothing in life equal to good books. They are everything.'

Annette snorted. 'It is the soul — the heart. An empty heart ——' Annette's great eyes were lifted toward the ceiling. 'A heart not loving —— In this college there is nothing for the heart — nothing.'

Lucy looked arch. 'Is it the young men you miss, Annette?'

'English young men? I do not care for English young men.' Annette marched out of the room.

'You know the French,' hinted Lucy when Annette had closed the door majestically behind her. Lucy had read Balzac the preceding summer and had even peeped into Maupassant's 'Une Vie.' 'They're always thinking about young men.'

Poor Lucy! Did she never have shy memories of the young men in Dorset with whom she had danced year after year?

When Nora emerged from the reading-room at noon and found the sun shining, a low pale sun scarcely rising above the grey Georgian houses with yellow blinds in Bedford Square, she often decided not to go back to her work, but to spend the afternoon walking the streets. She was almost happy then. She loved the winding lanes of the City, the mazes of Southwark, the forest of church spires she saw from London Bridge.

But too often at the end of these footsore adventures, there was the old pressure of pain at her neck, the tight ache in her throat. She must be homesick. It was being

out of her own country. She wanted Petersfield, Miss Steele, Ruth and Helen, dear Cordelia and the quiet Maronac house near the lake. With her international conception, she had once scoffed at an irrational love of one's own country. But there was something — you just couldn't explain it away. She felt it even in the friendliness of Michael's and Ellen's drawing-room. The most charming, appealing people, and yet between them and her such fearful gulfs yawned. From the women she felt less separated, but it was the men she wanted to know. The Irish actor — there were several actors; the violinist who played for his friends as he never played in Queen's Hall; the painter in the Royal College of Art hating his classes the way Margaret Abington had hated hers; the intense man with the streaks of grey in his chrysanthemum-yellow hair, who was on Michael's paper — it was they who followed her as she ran toward the college gates. But perhaps even more she thought of the men who were nothing. What they did wasn't what mattered. It was their grace, their careless talk with her, their mere existence she wanted for herself. But they were all English, and removed from her by this silly and accidental fact. She always the stranger. She vowed she would keep away from the supper parties, but the next week she suffered all over again the blend of pleasure and pain.

No one — nothing was to blame. She was tired. She worked too steadily in the B.M. The bad air, and then getting nowhere with her work. She must stay away

for a few days and rest. But in the morning she started reading a new book. She was afraid of the silence of her room, broken only by the hard heels of the English girls marching back and forth to and from lectures. She admitted to herself sitting late at night over her dying fire that when she had come to England she had counted on life's being different for her. New scenes. A fresh existence. Something — changing all the past. The men at Ellen's — each week the feeling that she would meet some one who —— But always the same thing. The Englishmen standing in groups against the wall. 'Clever American woman,' they might say. 'Attractive in an odd way. Almost beautiful, you know.' These composed Britishers whom Annette hated and Nora found mysteriously different. But never did they and she quite meet on a common understanding. Perhaps if she had not been forced to hurry away so soon after supper ——

'It's ridiculous — you running back to that old college like a schoolgirl,' scolded Ellen. 'Michael could write a letter to that woman — his connection with the paper would impress her. That kind always are impressed that way.'

'If you like,' Michael added, smiling at Nora.

But Nora remained firm in asking for no concessions, and each week she had the same sensation of just missing what she most wanted.

Work — doing something. She must keep very busy.

V

On the last Saturday before the Christmas vacation, Maggs, Nora, Annette, and Lucy went to visit the Docks. From the Underground they walked through Shadwell, the district where Michael Powys, as a Cambridge undergraduate, had lived in his vacations. When they started, the sun had shone upon their undertaking, but now the gloom of winter intensified the dreariness of the rows and rows of wretched houses and the dirt of the children playing in the narrow streets.

A guide at the entrance to the Docks conferred with Maggs. He handed over the young women to the foreman of the ivory warehouse. Thousands of elephants' tusks from East and West Africa, from Asia, from South Africa, lay piled upon the floor. The foreman pointed to one beautiful polished tusk, a creamy, shiny white.

'Worth two hundred and fifty pounds, that one,' he informed them.

There were walrus and rhinoceros tusks in the great warehouse, and twisted tusks, at least five feet long, from an Arctic fish, out of which ivory beads were made.

The spice warehouse had the delicious odor which Nora associated with Eastern tales. Nutmegs, cloves, cinnamon, all sent up great columns of pungent sweetness. Wool — rubber — in all stages. Australia, South Africa, Siam, New Zealand, South America. The tropics — frozen seas. These far-off treasures nursed the imagination, freed one from the confining walls

of Saint Ethelfreda. Oceans — typhoons — sailors — deserts — caravans — the whole world.

The wine cellars the guide saved for the end, dim, cavernous spaces, the roofs white with the fungus growth from evaporating wine, through which both the guide and his party carried torches which lighted up the rows of fat casks.

But the heavy fog had shut off the river from the Docks, and no boats could land, so the wharves stretched out into nothing.

On the way back to the Underground station, they passed the Shadwell Market. Nora thought herself hardened to misery after almost three months of London. She had learned to hurry past the men without legs sprawled on the pavement who drew pictures with colored chalk and held out ragged caps for pennies. She had seen a wild-eyed man feeding out of a garbage can in Tottenham Court Road. From the steps of the National Gallery she had watched the army of unemployed mass themselves at Trafalgar Square, distribute their handbills, with unutterable woes upon them, and make their terrible speeches. She knew that if she stood in a theatre queue to get a cheap seat in the pit, she must endure the lively business contrived by those who gathered in a few pennies where they could. There were the three blind men led past the queue by a fat boy. They seemed to follow her everywhere. And the organ wheeled up by the red-faced man, who played and sang, while his friend, with iron plates on his heels,

did a clog dance. There were whole families trooping past, avoiding the penalties of begging by some pathetic display of feeble wits. Card tricksters, melodramatic monologuists with appeals to heaven, fiddlers, pipers — all of them concluding with the same speech before they passed the hat. They were the London unemployed. The world owed them a living. 'Only a penny or two, Miss.'

But Nora was not prepared for Shadwell Market filled with Christmas toys. Dolls hung suspended over the crowd of children, beautiful smiling dolls with pink and blue dresses, perambulators for dolls, beds, bureaus, little stoves, boxes of dishes with tiny teapots, Noah's arks, games, drums, pistols, trumpets, a toy telephone, pails of candy, barrels of nuts, apples, oranges. Around them crowded dirty ragged little girls of eight or ten, carrying pale babies under their shawls. Even little boys carried babies. Women, tugging small children by the hand, showed that there would soon be new babies. Babies — more babies. So the world goes on.

Nora had never seen so many children before. And children in a great flock often bring tears to the eyes, even if they are happy children.

The others stopped to buy some toys for the college Christmas tea. Nora bought dolls, and, when she came to the dirtiest little girls carrying the dirtiest babies, she slipped a doll into their hands.

The next morning in the British Museum, Nora picked up a book Annette had wanted her to read. It

was about the emotion of beauty. She read a few pages. Then the book dropped from her hand. She had decided that instant to write a history of women in the textile industries.

VI

Nora was sitting in the drawing-room of Michael Powys's brother Tom in Felton, two hours out of Manchester. Mrs. Powys, in a setting of heavily stuffed furniture and large oil paintings, was pouring tea. Her fat blonde face had an amusing lack of harmony with her elaborate Paris clothes.

'I can't understand why you want to see our mills, Miss Deming. You won't understand anything about it. I never can. Just fearful noise and queer hot smells. I insisted that we live as far away as possible. All that dirt, you know. Even here the atmosphere is always smoky. Please don't talk about the mill to Tom when he comes in. He's so bored by any reference to it. Of course, it's profitable. But if he hadn't inherited the business, we could live in London or near by like Michael and Ellen.'

As a preparation for her visit the next morning, Mrs. Powys felt impelled to contribute a few facts. 'They're so ungrateful — working-people. The more you do for them, the worse they are. In bad times, my husband has kept his factory going at a loss to himself just to help out his hands. But they never appreciate such things.'

'Isn't it also an advantage to an employer to keep his industry from getting disorganized?' Nora inquired.

'Not at all. And you'll be shocked at the way those mill women neglect their children. Off to the mills before their babies are two weeks old. The children grow up wild — hardly know their mothers. If they'd stay home, take care of their houses, and cook proper meals ——'

It was useless to bring a ray of light into Mrs. Powys's dark views of the human beings upon whom her husband's industry rested.

In the morning Nora motored through hilly country dark with smoke to Mr. Powys's mill, where the manager conducted her over the various departments, shouting out explanations of the mysteries of cotton manufacture above the din of machinery. He had worked for the Powys family, father and son, for forty years. Splendid men both of them. If their workers did the right thing, they couldn't have better employers. But with these trade-unions putting wrong ideas in people's heads and the Labor Party in Parliament shouting nonsense, there was no telling what England was coming to.

On the second day Nora was conducted through another mill by Miss Chapin, a slow-moving, spiritless woman in the Welfare Department, and a friend of Maggs and the girls at the Working-Women's College near London. They went from one hot, noisy depart-

ment to another. In the spinning-room Nora found women employed, ring-spinning it was instead of the mules, which required men. Many of the workers were far advanced in pregnancy. And the little 'doffers' who took off the full bobbins and put on empty ones appeared very small for the legal fourteen years. Neglect and undernourishment had not made giants of North England people.

Miss Chapin was discouraged about her mill. It belonged to an extensive limited company, with no concern in the industry except its profits. She disapproved of the policy carried out of taking back the mothers of illegitimate children, a bad example for the rest of the girls.

'The only difference they make is that the unmarried girls have to stop work a month sooner than the others. But they can come back as quick. They bring their babies in here for me to see. It's seldom they try to get rid of them. I can't understand it.'

There was much Miss Chapin would never understand. But she did the best she could.

Nora mingled in the noon crowd of mill people hurrying home to their dinner. The women, with their shawls thrown over their heads shuffling along in clogs, were a picturesque novelty to a stranger. Small brothers and sisters came bringing lunches wrapped up in red bandanna handkerchiefs for members of the family who lived too far away from the mills to go home. The babies in the perambulators, potential spinners and

weavers, in a community where few children dreamed of a future outside the mills, looked sad to Nora. The rows of stone houses buzzed with the excitement of home-coming workers. A little doffer whom Nora had noticed in the spinning-room smiled at her from a group of children.

'I seen you in our place,' she said shyly.

Nora ate a cheerless bun and a hard banana on a chilly bench near the trolley line. The spring sun had been obscured by the dense clouds of smoke which gave the manufacturing community a uniformly drab countenance. Raw winds blew from the sea.

The trolley entered a beautiful valley, with tall chimneys rising above the pale green foliage of early spring. The next mill, unlike the efficiently constructed new building Nora had seen in the morning, was a rambling structure close to a stream, which had evidently in an early day furnished water-power. Miss Gretton, the Welfare Worker, in a light but littered office, was a brown-eyed, enthusiastic woman close to forty. She was attached to her employer, John Alexander, by a lifetime of the finest kind of association. He was a grand old man with four sons just like him. All of them lived within sight of the factory. Four generations of workers had toiled in the mills established by the grandfather of the present owner. His employees were recognized in all the mill towns clustered around Manchester as steady, honest men and women. Old John Alexander got the best of them. He tolerated no

looseness. No children born out of wedlock in his mills. One case in fifty years, Miss Gretton said.

The workers stopped to show Nora what they were doing. At piece-rates, this meant the gift of valuable time. But a pleasant spirit of friendliness was evident everywhere. One woman explained her warping; another, handsome and pink-cheeked, her weaving. In a corner a very old man, following an obsolete method of warping, worked alone.

'He was too old to learn the new ways,' Miss Gretton explained. 'He never looks up from his work. I don't believe he's seen me all the years I've been here.'

In the Welfare Room a young girl brought tea for the visitor. All the mill was taking a few minutes off for afternoon 'drinking.' Over their tea Miss Gretton admitted that family mills like hers were rapidly being replaced by the limited companies operating scores of mills, with impersonal, disinterested stockholders. The paternalistic system must give way to some organization where the workers looked out for their own well-being. But the old way, at least their mill, had been so pleasant. Like Miss Chapin she had her discouragements. The evening clubs designed for the improvement of the work-people were not well attended.

'The cinema and boxing matches — it's all some of them want. And now the radio. We've tried reviving some of the old village customs — the games, the May pole and the May dances. There's one old man who's

tried to keep them up. But they don't care. And the reading-clubs and the lectures — what was my father's life and mine — only a few want them.'

When they parted at the trolley station, Nora, waving from the car until she could see Miss Gretton's sturdy figure no longer, knew that her book was already begun.

VII

In the British Museum reading-room Nora began over again. All her life she had been preparing herself for the new book. Women — women — their lives — their frustrations — their work. What she had done before was like the background of a tapestry — sky, earth, trees. She was now to weave in the main figures. These she had already started in the dark winter weeks when she thought she was accomplishing nothing.

She wanted to be fair, to observe all sides, to keep her historic perspective. She was pleading no cause, making no case. Perhaps when the facts were gathered, her readers could go farther. But that was not for her. She no longer felt fatigue. Every day showed some trifle finished. More and more hours — stretching out the labor of the day.

At night the immensity of her task lay before her when she tried to sleep, like the vast spaces of the heavens which she had observed with Ruth Ewing back in Petersfield. All those whirling worlds and millions of suns. Numbers, space, time, they went beyond all hu-

man comprehension. Hardy's 'Two in a Tower,' which Ruth had sent her at Christmas time. The poetry of the sky. Immeasurable infinity. A big undertaking. It was what one tried to do. All those women — all countries — all ages. The little she could do for England was less than the smallest star. Generations of women spinning — spinning — spinning. In Greece, in Palestine, all over Europe. China, India, Japan — perhaps she would never know much about them. Even in England the Wyf of Bath, the ladies Piers Plowman had chided, Margaret of Shrewsbury — but so many more. Then women the weavers — carders — winders. In her dreams one pale figure after another — stretching on and on — an endless procession — the same unending toil. Spiders — they had become spiders. Long silken threads everywhere. Had she read of a woman changed into a spider? A Greek tale. She was awake.

'Are you made so, Nora, that in the spring you can shut yourself up in that miserable B.M.?' inquired Annette sarcastically. 'Live on books in the spring? The sun so beautiful. The sunshine on my face, my hands — it is as if I, too, were growing like the flowers. The daffodils springing up in the grass. By moonlight I wander down to the lake. Like butterflies fluttering — the daffodils on the edge of the water. Another week, and they will be gone. My poor little Nora. Is it the little old men in the skull caps in that B.M. reading-room she dreams about at night?' Annette, laughing,

bobbed forward and kissed Nora with her double-cheeked French kiss.

'You don't think you are working too hard?' inquired Lucy gently.

At first Nora fought against the pain in her neck which climbed to the top of her head and lay there like a heavy pressing stone and then went down, down her back, until each aching nerve cried out, and she could not sleep. Through a course of spring lectures at the School of Economics given by the most famous historian of industrial England, a man who emerged seldom from his country library, Nora hung on. Each day a little harder than the one before. One morning in May she had to stay in bed.

Matron, the college nurse, said all she needed was rest. She shut Annette and Lucy out of the room. She pushed back the curtains so that the sunshine streamed through wide-open windows, and one could hear the birds singing in the garden, and smell the tang of the earth and the sweetness of the flowers. Nothing but rest. Sleep — sleep once more. One hour after another. The church bells — the clicking heels in the hallway between lectures, and the voices and the strike of balls in the near-by tennis courts.

At last Nora got restless. She wanted to see Annette and Lucy. She must thank Miss Talbot for the irises she had sent. Matron gave her a reluctant smile. 'Well,' she said, 'perhaps you may have a visitor now and then.'

From Clara, Nora first learned that London was not

so peaceful as usual. Clara had come in from her walk through her favorite streets, and was making a little fire, now that the chill of evening was coming on.

When she faced around, Nora detected an unnatural excitement in her usually calm eyes. 'I don't know what we're coming to,' she began. 'Not even the paper this morning to tell us the news.' Clara reached for the scuttle and shook it violently over the blazing kindlings. 'They've gone mad — don't know what they're doing. Everything's stopped — the trains they say. And all those dock-men down where you young ladies was ——'

'You mean the miners — that it's a sympathetic strike ——' Nora in her sick retreat had not seen a paper for days. She sat up in bed and stared at Clara.

'There's none o' my sympathy in it.' Clara turned with a snap toward Nora. 'What do they think they're doin' — London with no milk, butter, nothing. It's starvation. Like the war. I know how it'll go.'

Tabby during her frequent short visits had never mentioned the strike. To one suffering from nervous fatigue she was a delightful visitor. She had been ill during the war — a breakdown it was — and she had a skill in darting lightly over inconsequential topics which was both restful and entertaining.

What had prostrated Tabby? Had the war stricken her? One would never know.

To-night, having heard Clara's excited tones, she divined at once what they had been discussing.

'I hoped you wouldn't know,' she said, when she and

Nora were alone. 'But of course that would be impossible.' Tabby stretched out in the big chair near the fire. She looked very weary, her color gone, her eyes protruding and heavily circled. 'Things will be patched up,' she continued. 'They always are in England, you know. We make no desperate experiments — tearing down the old and beginning all over again. The Labor leaders are already scared. The strike has been too successful — the suddenness and completeness. They could do almost anything if they dared. But they only talk. Every one talks. In a few days we'll go on the same old way.'

Nora began to tell Tabby about her interrupted book, her visits to industrial England, her months of reading.

'You are older than most of the students here, Miss Deming?'

'Yes,' Nora answered.

'I thought so.' Tabby was gazing into the fire. 'I wonder if our universities will ever be anything but the playing-fields of infants.'

'I'd forgotten — that we, too, are like that — until I came here. I thought at first we were better — less intellectually provincial — more interested in the broader aspects of learning. But lying here — so many things ——'

Tabby had no illusions, then. But why couldn't she do something — treat the girls like equals — show them her own mind brilliant, clear, relentlessly logical?

Even Annette had caught glimpses of the real Tabby.

'She talks French like an angel,' Annette often said. 'I love her for that. For making my language beautiful — not like the rest of the English.'

Annette was beginning to droop. She longed for Paris. May in Paris. In London, the daffodils had become shrivelled husks on green stems. Before Nora was well enough to go back to the B.M., the general strike was over. The suddenness of the end no one could understand. The strikers assumed an apologetic attitude toward their recent insurrection. Only the miners held out, deserted by the rest, they thought, with no relief in sight. The vague promises of gentlemen — not for them.

VIII

Nora, seated in the taxi beside Annette, was seeing her off to Paris. That morning she had said good-bye to Lucy, fighting back her tears. The year was over. Annette, waving toward the red-brick buildings visible through the trees until they were hidden from her sight, threw herself against Nora and sobbed.

'Dear Saint Ethelfreda, dear Saint Ethelfreda. Will I ever see the beloved college again?'

'But Annette,' Nora reminded her, 'you know you really didn't like it here.'

'A whole year of my life — a whole year. Part of myself I leave behind me. Never again will those happy days return to me.'

At the station she wept afresh. 'We are sisters,' she sobbed against Nora's shoulder. 'Sisters forever. Al-

though the great ocean is between us, never will I forget my dear Nora. Never until I die.' The train sighed and began to move, Annette mopped her eyes, waved her handkerchief, and threw kisses to her dear friend. At last Nora was alone on the platform, friendless in London.

In the deserted college, she began to pack her trunk hurriedly. She was leaving London in the morning to go down to Cornwall for a few weeks. After that, she planned to take lodgings near the B.M. and read through the summer.

Late that night, she stood looking out of the window. There was a shimmer of moonlight over the garden, and she could smell the roses in the border. Like Annette, she felt a stirring of the heart at leaving Saint Ethelfreda. When she had said good-bye to the girls, she had got a glimpse into their locked lives. She pitied them as she pitied herself.

England, bowed down by taxes, by debt, by its huge pauper population, fed just enough by the dole to save it from utter starvation, held out no rosy promises to girls of the impoverished middle class. They would never marry the young men who in normal times would have become their husbands. Young men were too poor. If they married, they must seek brides with a dowry.

Consciously or unconsciously, after observing the spinsterhood of their native villages which went for a walk in the afternoon, poured out tea in a fussy, chilly drawing-room, or looked over the 'Times' before din-

ner, these girls had worked out escape from such a life by going to the universities. The hope of a profession — teaching or medicine — that was life for them. And in fighting for this kind of existence, they crushed out weakness, softness. They seemed hard. Struggling for scholarships, for 'firsts,' for posts with a living stipend — one had to be hard. And Miss Talbot, who knew so much better than the girls what was ahead of them, held them to their work. She had appeared tyrannical, cruel, but ——

Nora, so much older, with so much more of the struggle behind her, fewer years of helpless longing for the overpowering emotion that clutched at the throat, stung the eyes, made stabs of pain at the breast — for her now there was the salty flavor of work. But for them ——

A tap on the door. Clara held something in her hand. 'A letter, Miss, by the late post.'

The letter was from Judge Andrews. Cordelia was dead. She had been dead almost three weeks. The end had come quickly. Two weeks before her death she had been living alone, no one but her family doctor suspecting there was little of life left to her. The malady had been of long standing, ever since the year Nora went away to college, Judge Andrews believed. During the last two years, when Nora had not been back to Maronac, Cordelia had been much worse. The previous summer Doctor Elliot had wanted to send for Nora before she started abroad, but Cordelia had refused. She had been a resolute, valiant sufferer.

Cordelia's last letter was in Nora's bag to be answered in the quiet of Cornwall. She brought it out now. The date over a month back. Close to the end. The crabbed, almost undecipherable writing was unchanged, the news the usual parish happenings. Della had a baby of her own now. She and Nora would go together to see it next summer. Cordelia wrote, made plans for the future when she knew she was dying.

A resolute woman. Resolute and self-denying always. That terrible abnegation of Cordelia's. Regret was useless. It was too late. Cordelia with gnawing pain for two years, and no one near her. That lonely house — the succession of empty rooms — Cordelia waiting to die.

The rest of Judge Andrews's letter was business. Cordelia left everything to Nora, more than most people thought she had, the house with all of its furnishings, and property and investments which brought a comfortable income.

Nora's eyes were dry as she stared at the facts of Judge Andrews's letter. If she had loved Cordelia more — been kinder — remembered her oftener.

Nora realized for the first time what it meant to be entirely alone. She had no one. The tears came. She sobbed in the stillness of her dismantled room in Saint Ethelfreda College.

CHAPTER II

I

All the afternoon the scene from the train window had been the dreary wastes of Cornwall moors, trees tortured and dwarfed by twisting sea gales, stretches of furze, gorse, and rock, occasionally enlivened by sprightly clusters of purple flowers which tossed in the summer wind. Perhaps Nora had made a mistake to come. The Cornwall of which she had dreamed in London had been that of rocky coasts, with brilliant contrasts of sea, cliffs, and sky, and a midsummer sun which shone daily. Such beauty, she remembered now, had its foundation only in Margaret Abington's raptures over the summer she had spent at the farmhouse near Trebavas, where Nora was going; a memory to which Margaret returned again and again. Usually her friend had been right about places.

Nora's travelling companions had done nothing to relieve the monotony of the journey. Opposite her sat a pale, dark man whose spiritless expression and well-kept, bloodless hands suggested illness. For some time he had looked as if he wanted to talk to some one, but she had gazed steadily out of the window. She was afraid he would begin to tell her about his ruined health. Beside him was a young mother with a very active child, a smeary-faced little girl with thin, mo-

lasses-tinted hair which her mother had tried to curl. A querulous voice followed her succession of bobbings up and down, 'Now, Annie, be good; sit still, Annie. No, you can't have more sweeties, dearie.'

The child was now plunging toward the fourth traveller in the carriage, whose face, hidden behind his London paper, Nora had not seen since he entered. When the porter had arranged his luggage in the rack, very good, but long used, the dull sheen of it, its substantial quality, had made her curious about its owner, a tall man in shaggy tweeds and golf stockings who had slipped quietly into the seat beside her a moment before the train moved. He had the careless, travelled ease of the bags over his head, an aloofness to his companions in the carriage.

Annie's waving, sticky hands now clutched at the defences of newspaper.

'Annie,' shouted her mother, 'don't trouble the gentleman. I'm sorry, sir,' she apologized, giving the child's hands a quick smack.

'Not at all. No trouble,' he murmured, once more resuming his reading.

Nora, roused from the dreariness of the landscape, had looked quickly toward the disturbed traveller. He was, as she had suspected, like those young men she had met at Ellen's, who were nothing in particular, with the baffling charm of nonchalant, cheerful acceptance of that importance which is superior to any mere profession or slavery to the arts. They had achieved signifi-

cance at birth, with no trouble to themselves. If it had been trouble —— But this stranger, at second glance, was not entirely of their brotherhood. He was lean like them, but with more iron about him. His face was bronzed, his very dark hair burned by the sun. His prominent cheek-bones and his nose and jaw had the angularity which might be Scotch. Pictures of Highland chieftains showed the same hawk profile. His general bearing, his erectness as he sat in the swaying carriage, suggested military discipline — the army — a man who gave orders.

The pale man, encouraged by the confusion, looked up once more at Nora. He pointed to the purple flowers clustered against the rocks.

'Foxgloves. That's Cornwall. They're everywhere.'

'But it's desolate country,' she said.

'You wait.' A bland smile lighted up the drooping features. 'Wait till you get near the sea.' His gaze wandered to the man next to her, but the newspaper was too much of a barrier. He went on talking to Nora. 'You've never been in these parts before?'

'No.'

'You're travelling toward the coast?'

'Yes.' Then, not wishing to seem rude to a person so obviously ill, she added, 'I'm going to Trebavas. You know it? I get off at Pelreath.'

There was a rustle of newspaper beside her. Her neighbor's eyes were turned in her direction. They were deep blue, with a direct glance that did not avoid hers,

as he slowly measured her with a detached, swift interest before he returned to his paper.

'Very fine coast,' the pale man said. 'I know the south coast better. Around Penzance. I go there for the climate.'

'Oh, yes.' He was ill, then. She was conscious of the difference between the two men in the carriage, the tanned vigor of one, the anæmic transparency of the other. He wouldn't live long. Perhaps he knew.

A deep voice interrupted Nora's speculations. 'Would you care to look at this?' The man in tweeds was holding out his newspaper.

Although she didn't care to read, she thanked him, and made a pretence of examining the headings on the first page.

'The cricket matches at Lord's — they're on page 12,' he suggested.

She smiled. 'I'm afraid I don't care much about cricket.'

'Oh.' The rising and falling of his interjection was like Tabby's.

'I don't understand cricket.'

'It's very simple, really.' He was now smiling too, his smile making him unexpectedly boyish and a little less assured. His blue eyes had a gleam which attracted the smeary little girl a second time. She turned from the pictures in her mother's gaudy magazine and looked at him. Then, dropping down from her seat, she planted a sticky fist upon his knee.

'Annie, don't you bother the gentleman.'

'Please don't be troubled on my account.' Again that aloof expression which covered his face like a mask. 'I, too, am going to Trebavas,' he said, turning once more toward Nora to escape the mother's embarrassed apologies. 'It's an unusual place to go. Very isolated and dull, really.'

'I had a friend who spent a summer there and loved it. It's because of her I'm going.'

He crossed one leg over the other, and shifted his position in his corner seat so that they faced each other. 'Yes — the quiet. I understand. And very fine cliffs.'

'She has told me about them. The colors — the blackness of them and then the deep green sea.'

'My old school friend is rector there. I've been coming to him for short visits a long time now. Rather a nice old Norman church. He's very keen about it. He'll be glad to show it to you. It's away from the village, close to the cliffs. One hears the sea all through the prayers.'

'How lovely!'

'Yes, but ——' He looked smilingly toward Nora's childlike face under her severe blue travelling hat. 'It may be too unexciting for a young person.'

He evidently took her for an eccentric American schoolgirl, wandering about in queer places. She smiled to herself, and to hide the quiver of her lips looked out of the window again.

With late afternoon, the sun, falling lower, made long shadows on the moor and deepened the mauve of the

massed foxgloves to purple. One would not care to walk alone in this threatening, waste country. The sick man and the troublesome child first went to sleep, then the tired mother. Nora and her neighbor were left to themselves. They conversed from time to time in low tones. A shyness swept over her. She took up the paper lying between them.

'I wonder if they'll take Germany into the League this summer.'

'You believe in the League? I thought Americans didn't, you know.'

'Yes — many of us. We place our hopes in anything that ——'

'You have no interest in the glories of our late disturbance, then?' he inquired.

He was clearly enough a military man. No need to be silly or get excited. One's real opinions — they are saved for the rare moments — not for a railway carriage.

'No,' she answered, 'not very much.'

There was something queer about his eyes, behind the deep blue of them and the directness of their glance, which she could not understand. He was hiding something — not from her only, a stranger, but from every one. Some hurt — some painful secret.

Looking out, Nora saw Pelreath painted on the station benches. Some ponies with two-wheeled carts were waiting near the platform. As she began to bestir herself, the sleepers awoke. The tall stranger was lifting her bags

from the rack and carrying them out to the platform. He raised his hat, and turned to get his own luggage. The pale man smiled at her, the mother and child waved. In front of her a slight Englishman in clerical dress was examining the passengers. He looked a little like Father Stokesbury — the same brilliant smile.

'Neville, old boy! I couldn't see you at first.'

The wind-swept wastes, the rocks, the furze and gorse. A pang of desolation swept Nora. She had come all this distance to throw herself among strangers.

'Miss Deming? The American lady? I got the pony an' jingle over this way, Miss.' A mild little man had approached her, his stiff hat held like a salver in front of him.

As Nora climbed into the cart, she saw her travelling companion driving off in a grey two-seater with his old friend. He lifted his hat and smiled before they disappeared behind the tall hedges of the road toward Trebavas.

'The rector's got his friend down again,' observed Nora's driver. 'Army man. Major West.' As they passed between the hedges which shut out the landscape, he introduced himself as Thomas Pentillie, Mrs. Bodmin's new husband. She was Bodmin now only for business. They had been married two weeks. 'In time for the summer visitors,' he explained. 'I'm a big help to her that way.'

The road turned suddenly and ascended above the valley. There was a rush of air, and then Nora saw the

sea. It was booming against a deep purple cliff lost in green water and pale green spray.

'Oh,' she breathed.

Mrs. Pentillie, who as Mrs. Bodmin had known Miss Abington, a very pleasant American lady always out on the rocks painting, ushered Nora up to a little room on the third floor with a view of the sea.

'It was hers — your friend's. I remember her wantin' the top o' the house,' Mrs. Pentillie said.

Nora stood looking out of the open window. A chill filled the room now that the sun lay low over the water. It was almost time for supper, Mrs. Pentillie had announced. Only a moment or two before she had to join the strange Britishers below, sit down at a table crowded with holiday visitors. She could hear their voices. Somehow she had not thought of them before — only seacoast and great spaces. She was afraid. She wasn't very hungry. If she could walk out toward the sea first — not have any supper. Walk toward the church — a bell tinkled, tinkled. Doors slammed. Some one laughed. Again the bell. Nora washed hastily, brushed back her hair, and went downstairs.

The other boarders — paying guests they said in England, even at Mrs. Pentillie's possibly — were already seated. Nora slipped into a vacant chair. A strange man, not Mr. Pentillie, was at the head of the table, carving a guinea fowl. Nora sniffed at it hungrily. An angular woman next to her smiled.

'Miss Deming, let me make you acquainted with

every one.' She began to call out the names of the people gathered around the table.

'Oh, the American lady,' commented a stout woman down near the guinea fowls. She paused in a monologue she had begun upon the Second Coming. 'We been hearing about you. Travelling all alone, too. You Americans are so adventurous.'

Opposite Nora sat a husband and wife talking together. There was something so united, so indivisible about them, that Nora sensed their relationship at once. Next to Miss Wallis, who had conducted the introductions, were two women who looked exactly like her, the same dun coloring which was neither brunette nor blonde, the same bloodless faces and bony figures. They were sisters, Miss Wallis told her, all taking the holiday they looked forward to the whole year.

'After a winter in London,' she concluded.

The other two bobbed behind or in front of their obstructing relative, and said a word or two to Nora. This was a beautiful place. She would love it. Miss Wallis explained about the others in a low tone during the passing of plates. The man serving, Mr. Downey, was on furlough from Central Africa. Some Government job. His wife hadn't seen him in three years. She couldn't stand the climate. The child between them, a bright little thing, was almost four years old. Sad — living that way. And the two on the other side, aunt and niece, both post-office clerks in London. Nora looked in the direction of a stout black-haired woman with a face like a

tomato and a girl much like her, slightly less red, with a shaggy mane of coarse, dark bobbed hair.

'They can't talk without swearing,' Miss Wallis said sadly.

On Nora's end of the table were two middle-aged women dressed in heavy black. They were discussing the church services of the preceding Sunday. The church was, then, not very far away.

After supper, when the rest of the procession trooped into the drawing-room, the Wallis sisters offered to show Nora the path to the cliffs. In a week they had learned all the pleasant walks in the vicinity. As the four passed back of the house, two of Mrs. Pentillie's Leghorn hens trailed after them. Cows in a near-by farmyard looked up, and then came slowly toward the fence. As they walked along the narrow hedge-bordered path, the youngest of the three sisters joined Nora. She was probably not much over thirty, less neutral than the other two, with a sturdy spring to her step unlike the drag of theirs.

'Two men among us,' she began. 'One a Quaker — the other from Africa. And both married. Rare, isn't it? Is this what I've come down from London for?'

Her sisters behind laughed heartily. They regarded Dora as a terrible wag, Nora guessed almost immediately.

'And the Quaker lady hangs on to her husband as faithfully as to her pocket-book,' Dora went on.

All three regarded the middle-aged femininity of their

fellow guests as a tremendous joke on Adeline Pinks, the post-office niece, probably as much on her aunt, one of those maiden ladies who never knows that her day is over.

'They keep an eye out for what Pentillie will bring from the station. "Another woman," they said, when you drove up before supper.'

'I'm sorry,' Nora said, laughing.

They climbed over one slate hedge. A light mist lay over the cliffs above the sea, which resounded from below. The high grass between the hedge-rows was very wet, the foxgloves against the stone walls drooping with their load of dew. As she was mounting the stairway made of flat stones over the second hedge, she heard her first lark. The bird had swooped up, and was singing, singing as he climbed higher and higher. She sat on the flat top of the stile, looking up toward the sky and listening to the warblings, fainter and fainter. Just as the poets had told her, singing as all of her life she had dreamed they would sing. The three sisters stood waiting for her to climb over the hedge. While she had been sitting on the stile, the larks had slowly gathered in the sky, one after another, hundreds of them, it seemed, singing together, close to the last yellow light.

They went on toward the cliffs. Far below sounded the sea, covered with a lacy haze, like thick cobwebs. They stood, looking down, not speaking a word.

They followed the path close to the edge of the cliffs, as it twisted in and out. Another hedge. Standing on

the last tone, Nora saw a square tower rising above a dip in the flat stretches of green. The church. A queer feeling, like pain, made her turn.

'Shouldn't we be going back? It's getting dark.'

Between the last hedge-rows, in sight of Mrs. Pentillie's lights, night had already fallen. They crept cautiously forward. In the drawing-room the household was gathered around the Government official from Africa telling tales. Nora paused at the doorway, listened a moment, and then went upstairs.

II

In the morning she hurried through breakfast and took the path which led to the sea. The sky above her was deep sapphire, the sun strong and clear. She could hear the lambs bleating from the other side of the hedges, the tinkle of bells, the ecstasy of the morning sea. She followed the general direction of the preceding night, and sat close to the edge of the cliff, looking down. Some sheep were grazing in the grassy crevices between the black rocks. The gulls swept close over her head, and dipped down to the water, with hoarse shrieks. A sweetness — a familiar sweetness was all around her. Wee purple flowers close to the ground everywhere. Thyme — wild thyme. She knew from the smell. She pressed a purple cluster between her fingers.

A crunching of rocks, and footsteps approaching. Possibly some one from Mrs. Pentillie's house. Nora gazed steadily out upon the sea.

'Good-morning.' The tweeds — the familiar voice. 'I felt sure I should see you again.'

Major West seated himself on the rock beside her. 'Jolly day, isn't it? So you're a near neighbor of Reggie's? Over there? How very good! And do you think you'll like this place?'

She assured him that she liked it, that already she loved it. Trebavas was what she had wanted. She went on to describe the Pentillie gathering, its middle-aged quality. They would not bother her. She liked them that way best, she had decided. They wouldn't wander far away from Mrs. Pentillie's summer-house, with the British flag floating over it, a border of geraniums, and a comfortable view of the sea.

They sat looking over the shining blue water. He brought out a pipe, knocked it against the rock. The sheep bounded up the trail and tinkled past them. Once more the larks were beginning to sing, a faint, cheerful squeak only, high in the sky.

'Reggie's in the church. Should you care to see it? Oh — I forgot to introduce myself yesterday. Neville West ——'

She murmured her name in return, and he helped her up from the rock. They climbed over the stiles, passed rude heaps of stone, like the ruins of a castle wall, and entered the churchyard. Reginald Enderby stood in the doorway. As she saw him in the sunshine, holding a funny broad-brimmed hat like Father Stokesbury's, he looked enough like him to be an older brother — older

than Father Stokesbury, so long ago. When he smiled, he was like an old friend.

'Miss Deming would like to see the church, Reggie.'

'Delighted, dear boy. It's really a snug little place, Miss Deming.'

The church was like a twilight chamber. Its thick walls were cut by Norman windows with dim glass; there was a Norman font near the door, with four fat legs and a funny face cut into the stone.

'Major West says this old chap looks like me.' The rector twinkled.

It was a beautiful little church in its dusky way, with its timbered roof, its black-oak rood screen, its dull seats, and grey stone walls. Looking out through the open doorway, one felt the peace of its shade, a retreat from the burning brightness of the sky and sea. The rector pointed out the tombstones in the churchyard propped up with buttresses.

'To keep the winter winds from blowing them away,' he explained. 'We have some jolly blows here then.'

She glanced back for another look at the interior. 'You like our old places?' he asked her.

'Very much.'

'Perhaps you'd be kind enough to have tea with us in the garden this afternoon. The widow of the former rector is coming. It would be a pleasure to her, I know. There are some ruins of the thirteenth-century monastery there I'd like to show you.'

Major West walked back toward Mrs. Pentillie's with

Nora. She was late for dinner. Mr. Downey had finished serving.

'Well, where you been?' inquired the large woman, who was still arguing the tenets of Seventh Day Adventism. 'I thought you'd jumped over the cliff.'

In the rectory garden Nora was seated beside Mrs. Cecil, the widow of Father Enderby's predecessor, white-haired, her large hands covered with diamonds. As Mrs. Cecil talked, a cigarette dangled from her mouth. When the others took the burden of the conversation, she smoked with quick puffs one cigarette after another. She was like a chimney, with good drawing powers.

Major West talked very little. He sat holding his pipe, looking across first at one and then the other of Reggie's guests. When they were exploring the monastery after tea, Father Enderby took possession of Nora, Major West coming up slowly behind with Mrs. Cecil, who had little interest in ecclesiastical remains, she said.

'I'm one myself,' she informed Nora. 'Not in very good condition. Can't you restore me — like the church — Reggie?'

The monastery ruins were a hoary background for the garden. Foxgloves grew close to the lichen-covered walls, and there were clematis vines over one sunny end.

'Charming — charming,' Mrs. Cecil murmured at appropriate intervals, in spite of the fact that her best days had been spent here. Reggie really had improved the garden. Then she confided to Nora: 'These men

know nothing about my poor legs. Handsome man — Major West. Reggie's always talking about him. How violent he looks sometimes! Don't fall in love with him, my dear. Young girls always do with that kind of menacing desperation when it smiles at them.' Mrs. Cecil laughed at her blush. 'Take Reggie instead. He's one of the sweetest creatures. A saint with a sense of humor.'

III

Nora had been in Trebavas a week. Since the day of the rectory tea, Reggie — she thought of him as Reggie always — had assumed the rôle of guide to the young American who had strayed into his quiet settlement. He offered himself and his two-seater in her service, Major West with comical dignity perched behind in the dicky, for a pilgrimage in search of such neighborhood antiquities as Cornish crosses and churches with Saxon walls, for a visit to the slate quarry, and a sight of the spot where Reggie had seen the very rare Cornish chough. Major West laughed at these excursions, but he did not refuse to join them.

In the primitive Cornwall scene of tumbling sea and rock, Major West, even in his rough country clothes, remained the sophisticate for whom a London club window in Saint James's Street seemed the appropriate setting. The face, with the arrogant curve of nose and the jaw held with unconscious pride, was a powerful contrast to Reggie's mild rusticity. But between the

two men existed an understanding which Nora, as an outsider, envied. They shared innumerable ancient jokes, had been raw schoolboys together, made frequent references to the war when they, no matter how separated, had depended on each other. 'Good old Reggie,' Major West said of his friend. 'Poor sinner,' Reggie called the Major.

When they stretched out on the grassy heights of the cliffs in the golden hour before dinner, Reggie, as an amateur botanist, explained the native flowers blossoming luxuriously all around them. To an American they would be entirely strange — the gay, yellow Tom Thumb; the sea pinks which they called thrift, almost like American red clover in color, Nora told Reggie; the snowy bell-shaped campion, and the pink stonecrop covering the rocks.

In the midst of Reggie's talk, Major West walked over to the edge of the cliff, and stood there tossing slate chips over the steep side. Nora joined him. Down — down — the stones rattled, until they could no longer be heard. The rocky walls, unrelieved by lichens, were blue-black zigzagging ravines against which the waves beat with a muttering, menacing thunder.

'And to think that all these flowers grow close up to the edge of such horror,' Nora whispered, as the spray struck the slate columns far below.

Major West nodded, turning his blue eyes, half-closed in a smile, toward her. 'Jolly old show — the sea with the tide rushing in,' he said, as they confronted the

limitless expanse of convulsive green waste, upon which not even a sail was visible.

Above Doscastle Strand early in the afternoon when the tide was low, the three of them looked down upon the groups of men, women, and children seated on the rocks, lying out on the smooth white sand, or plunging into the sea. The children, as they threw themselves with shouts against the crests of waves, were like sporting elves, mere midgets of humanity. Even the men and women had a comically insignificant aspect, funny little wiggles of arms and legs, puny struts of importance up and down. Upon the height one felt Olympic grandeur and serenity, detachment from the pigmy concerns of earth.

'Don't you ever go down to swim?' Nora asked Major West one day.

'Not of late. I haven't been swimming this summer.'

The day Reggie had church duties which carried him off to Exeter, Major West and Nora visited the caves, reached by a steep trail cut into the cliff. They entered the murky chamber and looked out upon the tossing, watery plain which could not reach them. But as the tide rose higher, the waves sent laps of water into the cave. One drew farther back. The water next time came closer. Soon the cave was filled with a great clamor. The sea shouted, boomed like a cannon. Nora scrambled hastily up the steep path to escape the crashing terror of the ocean-filled caves.

'You make me think of a Himalaya goat,' he said, coming on more slowly behind her.

While they rested on the grassy slopes at the top, he talked carelessly about India, his expeditions in the hills, the sunsets over the Mediterranean when he was going to Egypt. One gathered that he had been everywhere.

She, in turn, launched out on her favorite political topics.

'I didn't believe women really cared about that sort of thing,' he commented. 'But you Americans are different, I see.'

'No, I don't think we are.'

'Then you've been with men more — talked with them — got their point of view.'

'Oh!' Nora gasped, looking at him with wide-open eyes. Then she laughed. As she reflected on his magnificent conclusion, she laughed harder and harder. The delight — the wonder — the ridiculousness of fooling people that way. That she — from men — she could not stop laughing.

'Do — do help me,' she begged. 'I ——' Again ripples of helpless mirth swept over her, waves, torrents. She could never stop.

'I know what will make you stop laughing,' Major West said, looking down at her with uplifted brows.

'Tell me,' she entreated between her seizures. 'Anything.'

'You wouldn't like it.'

'Yes — yes.'

'You are very lovely when you laugh that way.' He pronounced the words with triumphant calm.

She looked solemn in an instant.

'See — I knew I could make you stop.'

'But I — I must tell you why — why I laughed.' She hesitated. 'Some other time.'

The next morning she found him pacing back and forth at the end of Mrs. Pentillie's lane.

'I thought I'd catch you here,' he began carelessly. 'Shall we walk toward Doscastle Strand?'

He sprawled lazily upon a mound of thyme, sniffing at it, then with his head raised against his clenched hands, regarded Nora seated near him with his disturbing, direct gaze. His eyes were like bottomless wells — depths she could not measure — his face a handsome, unintelligible defence. He had none of Reggie's comforting simplicity. She felt as if he were highly amused at her American gawkishness.

'Do you know, I do like you, Miss Deming,' he said. 'Really.' He gave a short laugh when he saw a flush spreading to her hair, flaming in the sunshine. 'Usually I detest young girls. Their chatter bores me — their chatter about themselves. But you — you converse so wisely, you know.'

'I — I'm not so young,' she protested.

'Oh, come.'

'I'm — I'm thirty-two,' she confessed.

'Magnificent. Now I understand why we get on so well together. Poor Reggie! He's shocked at the way

American parents let their young charge about unguarded. He's been trying to take care of you during your Cornwall sojourn. And you — why you're almost my generation. I'm close to forty.'

She noticed for the first time the threads of grey in his hair, the deep lines around his eyes and mouth. 'I'm going to tell you why I laughed so hard yesterday, when you ——'

'I haven't an idea what I said or did.'

'You said I'd talked to men a lot — had their point of view.'

'Well, you have, you know.'

'But not from talking to men. Only to women.'

'Come, now. That's a bit thick. Even American women ——'

'Yes, I'm serious. I've lived all my life in hives of women.'

'Good God! Not really?'

'It's true. I have. It's a man's world I've wanted to know — tried to know. What ought to be everybody's world. But women all the time — caught in petty squabbles and backstair talk. Nothing big — nothing ——'

'But isn't that what the dear creatures want?'

'No,' Nora contradicted, beating her fist against a rock. 'No — no. So many of us — what we want — I can't explain. It's endless. I can't make you see. What we have, it's pitiful — stifling. I can't stand it any more!' She burst into unexpected tears, and threw herself face downward on the ground.

She was so ashamed — women and their tears — how she hated them! And she had degraded herself even more by pretending it was intellectual participation in the lives of men she wanted. He would know. He couldn't help guessing. How he would despise her — weak, ridiculous creature. But she was helpless — no control before this man. No one before — this way —— What — what had changed her?

She rose quickly, tried to plan escape. If she could run away, not see the kindness — the pity in his eyes.

'I'm — ashamed — ashamed,' she murmured, her eyes still brimming over with tears.

He seized her hand so that she could not escape. 'No — no,' he protested. 'I understand. But a man's world isn't what you think. It's a rotten bore — most of it.'

He was like her. He had missed something. The more she saw of this dark, grim friend of Reggie's, the surer she felt that some reason lay behind his reticence, his consistent distaste for talking about the adventurous life she envied. She had thought first that he was a cynic, a man of the world who tossed everything serious away from him. But when he told her of his childhood, especially of his mother who died when he was nine, a wistful boyishness replaced his usual mocking tone.

'I come of an army family,' he confided one day when the two of them were searching out new cliff heights, new views far away from the rectory. 'Sandhurst was as inevitable for me as Oxford for Reggie. When I was

a youngster, my mother used to talk about Parliament. She was keen about one's social responsibilities. Perhaps if she had lived —— But Parliament's an awful bore, they tell me. All talk and muddling along. The army didn't give me time to get bored — constant excitement — first one part of the world and then another. But after a time ——' He broke off suddenly and began to talk of other things.

His references to the army were always that way, apologetic, unenthusiastic. He hated the army. She was sure of it. The conviction gave her an unaccountable upliftment.

After dinner one night Major West came upon Nora perched on the top of the stile listening to the skylarks.

'Reggie's driven me off. He's in solemn session with the vestry.' He sat down beside her.

The sun was glorious fire close to the sea, which turned pink, lavender, grey-green as the sun dipped lower and lower. Above them larks, faint specks in the darkening sky, continued to sing.

'Let's walk,' Nora suggested, drawing her coat around her. 'It's cold the moment the sun is gone.'

As they skirted the edge of the cliff, the shadows imperceptibly crept toward them, but they walked on. The stunted trees, the hedges, the hollows were changed into black shapes which rose up suddenly all around. Nora stumbled in a tangle of gorse.

'We've lost it,' she said, as Major West took her arm and tried to guide her back to the path.

Below them the sea moaned, the circling gulls cried. Another step, and the sea made a nearer clamor. The edge of the cliff, they now realized for the first time, was lost in darkness. Major West struck a match. The feeble little circle of light intensified the thick night surrounding them.

'Don't move,' he said, exploring the ground around them with his cane. 'We may be close to the edge.'

The undulating folds of grey, dark blue, black, shut out the trees, the hedges. The tinkle of a sheep bell, the twitter of a sleepy bird broke the silence between the regular beat of the waves far below.

He took a cautious step backward, drawing her by the hand after him. Another step backward. He lit a second match.

'This seems to be a path.'

Slowly they made their way, stumbling over rocks, over roots, over deep, moist furze, the ground rising up against their feet unexpectedly.

Major West bent over Nora. 'You're all right?' he asked. 'You aren't afraid?' He laughed at his question.

'No, no, not afraid,' she insisted in an unnatural, weak voice. The nearness of his face to hers, brushing it almost, his shoulder against hers, the pressure of his arm overpowered her with the sense of their intimacy, the night bringing them together, enclosing them in a small, dark room. No, she wasn't afraid, hovering, maybe, on the edge of the precipice. They stood motionless, then once more advanced one step at a time.

At last Mrs. Pentillie's lights winked in the distance.

'We were close to the edge,' Nora said.

'Yes, I didn't tell you. Back there, when I reached out with my stick, there was nothing.'

'Oh,' she shuddered.

Then they plunged through the caverns of the hedge toward the lighted windows and the sound of voices in the drawing-room. They crossed the lawn unobserved, and Nora guided him to the main road on the other side.

'Good-night,' she said hastily, drawing her hand away from his and hurrying back to the house.

In her room she sank down on the floor in front of the low window. She was trembling all over. She clutched the sill, and leaned her head over her tightly clasped hands. No, she hadn't been afraid out there lost in the night. But now —— In the darkness beyond, the waves crashed toward her nearer and nearer. Like the rattle of the sea in the caves. Something swept over her, chilled her, burned her, leaped over her head, and engulfed her. When she emerged, she was breathless, gasping, as if she had been fighting against the waves.

IV

Major West was waiting for Nora outside the rectory gate.

'Ah,' he exclaimed, as she came up to him in her moss-green hat and dress, 'you're the color of the sea this morning.' Then with a sigh, he added, 'Poor old

Reggie — old Reggie in Exeter,' and both of them laughed together.

The larks were swooping up from the ground with flashes of song and soaring toward the clouds. Timid lambs peered out from behind the shelter of their mothers at the intruders in their pleasant green pasture. There were foot-bridges to cross over little streams, with forget-me-nots clustering around them, their tender, unforgettable blue eyes blinking up toward the sun. Around interrupting cliffs, following steep trails up and down, sometimes leaving the sea and coming back to it gladly again, Nora and Major West tramped toward Roswithiel. From time to time they flopped down upon a soft bank of flowers to rest. Flowers were everywhere. One stepped upon them, lay upon them in this profuse summer season. They lost the trail, floundered in streams and swampy ground, leaped over pools, found the trail again. The whole expedition was a gigantic game of hide-and-seek against a prankish Nature with her tests of endurance.

On a hillside high above the sea, they sat down to eat their luncheon. Sticking up over the trees behind them was the steeple of Roswithiel church.

'It's a silent little church. There aren't any bells,' Major West explained. 'They were bringing them by ship from Plymouth, so the story goes, and there was a wreck in sight of the town. The natives say that on calm nights they can hear the bells ringing from the depths of the sea. Reggie can tell you all about it.'

'It's a pretty story,' Nora commented, looking across the meadow where men were haying. From the fragrance of the new-mown hay and the peace of the church tower, one turned back to the sea. She peered down — down the scarred black cliffs — at the sea, rising and falling, high ridges, low ridges, then a great mountain of heaving, destructive ocean.

A middle-aged woman panted up toward their hilltop. She was staying in Roswithiel, she said, a very pretty place, but lonely.

'I heard you laughing together,' she added, apologizing for her intrusion, 'and I felt I must come up. Just the sound of voices sometimes —— My husband and I, when we were young like you, came to Cornwall for our holidays. But it was a mistake for me to come back here.'

They begged her to share their luncheon, but she refused. If they didn't mind, she'd like to chat with them a bit before she went back to her lodgings. They had looked so happy sitting there together on the hillside that she had envied them. Every one ought to be happy. That was what life was for.

Beyond a twist in the trail, they dropped down into Roswithiel, with its whitewashed cottages lined up along the narrow stream trickling in from the sea, where the ducks paddled up and down, the granite quay and lighthouse mere toys beside the solid wall of rock behind the village. Hedges of valerian bent their fragrant rosy blossoms over the water. Children waded in the shallow

pools. Old men sat idle in the sunshine. Scarcely a human sound. Nora and Major West, perched on a hillock commanding the diminutive settlement, looked down upon the quiet scene.

'How sweet — how very sweet it all is,' breathed Nora.

Neville West sat holding one knee between his hands, his eyes blinking in the brilliant sunshine.

At tea-time they found a retreat from the sun, which had grown steadily hotter, a cool, dim room, with walls tinted yellow, and yellow curtains and yellow poppies on the tables painted a cool green.

'All your color scheme,' laughed Major West, as they entered.

'Tea — tea — oceans of tea,' begged Nora, pouring a cup of tea for him out of a green-and-yellow teapot.

Beyond the window where they sat, an old mill-wheel turned and splashed up cool columns of water. Drip — drip. There was green moss on the silver-grey wood of the wheel, mossy depths in the water. As it turned, Nora felt the streams flowing gently over her, refreshing her, making her over. Perhaps she had been happy before. But never like this — knowing she was happy — sure that this exquisite, beautiful moment was all for her.

They finished their lettuce sandwiches, and began on scones, with honey and Cornish cream, and cup after cup of tea, steaming hot, smelling like pressed rose leaves.

A deep sigh from her companion. She looked up. There was a queer twist to his face, as if he were in pain.

'What is it?'

'I want to stay here forever,' he said. 'Here — just like this.'

'And I — I too,' she added.

The waitress had left them. They sat regarding each other, neither one remembering to look away. He was pulling at the petals of the yellow poppies between them. Those long brown fingers —— She dropped her eyes.

'Sitting here — you and I — I suddenly remembered — never before — the quiet. After so many years. In the army they were always packing me off somewhere. After Sandhurst it was China. Next Egypt.' He held a poppy petal between his fingers, crushing it, letting it fall. 'I was married the night before we started for Cairo. Three years of it. My children were born there. I remember the trials of getting milk for them. Goat's milk it was. And they are great girls now. With their mother in Brighton. Molly, the oldest, going to dancing parties.' He rubbed his hand over his eyes. 'I'm glad they're girls — she can manage them — see that ——'

Nora poured out a cup of cold tea and drank it in great gulps, the sickening stuff nearly choking her. Of course, she ought to have known that he was married. A man with his charm, his handsome face. As the clergyman's widow had said, all women ——

'Until the war I was a soldier who had never seen a battle. Just dress parade. Always in some show or

other. My wife liked the excitement — the social responsibilities. She managed it all superbly. And then the war. I was twenty-eight, a spoiled boy who had danced at Embassy balls, army balls. At first I couldn't take it all in. I went around in a funk, a daze. I — a professional soldier. I was no good. And then — we all got spinning around. Orders from on top. At last the front lines. A sporting chance — facing danger every moment — your men such sporting chaps. Every day we thought they'd get us. We didn't care. Soon we wanted them to end it for us. It's like a nightmare. You keep thinking you'll wake up. The blood — quivering bodies — reeking — reeking — the shrieks — squeals. I never wake up in the morning without seeing and hearing it all over again — smelling — the horror of it.'

Nora swallowed a second nauseous gulp of tea. A few moments before, she had been happy.

'Nothing touched me. Not a scratch. On leave, constant excitement. It's the way of our family. They fancied it was what I needed. My wife and I — those few days — she with colonels, generals — I carrying on with young girls — bold, pretty things. I hated them back at the front.'

Nora's teacup rattled against the saucer. She sat bent over the table, her face shaded by her hands.

'Men beside me — dying like pigs in a slaughtering pen. But I — up to the end — I thought if I lived to see it over — I'd kill myself. Never another war then. But they sent me to Mesopotamia afterward. We were

quartered in an old Turkish fort. Nothing to do. Just thinking. The men spent their time with field glasses ready for a glimpse at a Turkish woman. Any woman — when they saw her, they called to the others. All that — thinking — it came to me — I knew I hated the army — hated it. And when I remembered that young boys like me — brought up on family traditions of the obligation to serve one's country, to preserve the Empire — killing — killing other men, I wanted to save them. All those days with nothing to do — the idea tortured me that there was no one — no one but me to tell them. Your serene years with time to give to books — I've envied you that. I read when I could. Adventure tales — then history. Thucydides over and over. But a soldier trying to write a book ——' He shook his head. 'He's like a plough boy with a pen. But I began to write for the cadets at Sandhurst. Four, six, eight hours a day. Sometimes nothing would come. The men lolling around me — their interminable stories — of women mostly. To escape I began writing again. Maybe I stuck at it too close. At last they sent me home — home for a rest. I wanted to finish my book. Only rest — complete rest they said. But how does one rest?'

Nora lifted herself out of her chair. They must go back. They had a long way to go. How could she drag herself over all those weary miles — up and down — hour after hour? She was so tired. Every bone cried out against the pull of that endless journey before they saw the tower of Reggie's church. But now that they

knew the trail, they plodded along more quickly than they had in the morning, though with all the elasticity, the keen sense of discovery gone.

In the meadows, which a few hours before had been so cool and moist, the hot sun beat down upon the little streams, which sent up steaming fumes. In the shadow of the rocks the ewes lay, indifferent to the poor lambs bleating and crying for the mothers they had lost. This way and that they scampered, seeking here, there, behind a bush, a rock, stupidly missing the place where their hot, bad-tempered mothers lay concealed.

Nora tried to help them. 'Here, poor thing, here is your mother.' But they plunged away from her in fear. Like people — so stupid — just missing what they most wanted. 'They will never find their mothers,' Nora cried out to the silent man beside her. But he didn't seem to hear her, as he stamped along over the spongy earth. A deep flush had spread over his face. Then he was very pale.

He fell on the ground close to the scanty shade of some stunted evergreen trees.

'Let's rest a moment,' he said in a queer, gasping voice.

She had a vivid memory of her mother during her last sickness. 'You are ill!' she exclaimed in terror. She got a cup out of the picnic bag and ran for some water from the stream they had passed. She spilled it over his face, his hands. Small beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. Bending down over him, she rubbed his hands.

A faint color came back to his face, the sickly pallor retreated.

'I — I'm sorry,' he breathed, turning toward her. 'I haven't been well. I ——'

'We walked too far.'

'No — I'm all right now. Quite all right, I assure you.'

Her tears splashed down upon his hands, which she was rubbing between hers.

'I'm sorry — I — I couldn't spare you — seeing — me. It's my heart. I — I want to tell you. I can't last long, they say. I came down to Reggie. He knows. A month — six months ——'

She covered her face with her hands.

'Oh, please,' he begged. 'It doesn't matter, really. It's been so delightful to-day. If — a minute ago ——'

'I — I care,' she wept, shaken with sobs.

'Until a few days ago — living or dying — it didn't matter,' he confessed. 'But now I — I want to live. Now when it's too late. Living — it can be sweet, enduring. I've found out. I want it —— Darling, I ——'

From his broken words she pieced together what he meant, what both of them meant, as they clung to each other in the shade of the scrubby pines around which the lost lambs still straggled with their heart-breaking cries.

But it was no use. They must go back, he to Reggie, she to Adeline Pinks and the rest of Mrs. Pentillie's guests waiting in their best clothes in the summer-house

for the tinkle of the dinner bell. The tide was coming up, the sun dipping lower and lower. They rose, and, after one last embrace, went on slowly, heavily down the trail.

V

Nora had one day more in Cornwall. A lady from Manchester was coming to take her room as soon as she was gone. Nora and Neville met after dinner on the black cliff glowering down upon Doscastle Strand.

'Nora, can't we, your last day, go back to Roswithiel?'

'If you wish,' she agreed feebly. In the depths of her present misery what they did no longer mattered.

On the second expedition, the sun shone with the same beautiful yellow gleam as the first time, but sun, blue sea, floating gulls, the flowers under their feet — none of it existed for them. Nothing was real but their wretchedness, their parting in the morning. As they ate their luncheon in the cool tea-room, the water dripped off the mossy mill-wheel, the little waitress hovered over them with the same flattering attentions as before, but the food they tried to eat was tasteless.

As they followed the single street of the village joining a highway farther on, Neville said, 'I meant to spare you, Nora. Never to let you know. That night on the cliff — when we might ——'

'Didn't you know that day on the train ——'

'Of course. I forgot. When I entered the carriage and saw you sitting there ——'

'You were hidden behind your newspaper. You couldn't see me. You didn't even look at me then.'

'I was hiding a blushing, schoolboy face, my darling.'

They had moments like this, when they were almost gay with each other, like happy lovers, alternating tenderness and playful scorn.

'What's this?' Nora pointed to a break in the rows of evergreen, a path sun-flaked and fragrant. 'Shall we see where it goes?'

At the end of the road, they discovered what appeared to be a gentleman's estate, surrounded by a wall of the tumbling slate of Cornwall hedges, covered with stonecrop, with foxgloves growing in the crevices. A little farther they got a glimpse of a grey stone house, yellow with lichen, its sharply pointed gables giving it a venerable aspect, as it stood on a hill overlooking the sea. The gate stood open. On it was a sign: 'Gentleman's Residence To Let. Caretaker Within.'

'Could we go in, Neville? At home I love to prowl around empty houses.'

They walked boldly up the driveway, with its little green islands of weeds, its straggling edges. To the south of the house was an unkempt, luxurious garden, giant geraniums, fuchsias in festoons tumbling over the garden wall, great heights of myrtle. Snapdragons and white pinks had sprung up, seeding themselves, in the neglected borders.

A woman in a brown dress appeared from around the corner of the house. She had a pale face spotted with

brown, the color of her dress, large, hollow brown eyes, a nervous twitch to her lips.

'Would you care to see the house?' she asked them in a bleak, disheartened voice. 'I'll be glad to show it to you.'

Nora turned to her companion. 'Could we, Neville? I'd like to see it.'

'If you wish.'

The caretaker tried to smile encouragingly. 'It's a pleasant old place. We thought it was let for the season. They paid money down. And then the last moment the lady decided not to come.' She ushered them into the house. 'My husband an' me — we do all the work here. You see how dry an' sunny it is inside, madam. Not like some o' these old stone houses.'

In the drawing-room, through the windows opening out upon the wall of fuchsias and myrtle, the sunshine poured in, and lay in golden squares upon the dark floors and brown walls, flickered upon the chairs and sofas in their crash covers.

'I could take 'em off in a minute, madam, if you'd care to see. The cretonne's all been washed for the summer. See — just this one. My lady — she planned the pink in 'em to match the fuchsias outside. Kind of a rose really — the color. She loved this room. But one lone lady in this house — an' since the war you know how it's gone with those that's had plenty before. An' her in cheap lodgings in Westgate — it's sad to think about.'

They followed her upstairs, where she displayed one room after the other. She did her job thoroughly, as well as she could.

'Folks hasn't the money,' she concluded when they had seen the last room. 'That's why a house like this stands vacant. Last year we had an American family. Money was nothin' to 'em. But I didn't care much for 'em. My lady kept one room for herself. No place is home to her like this. An' they — they treated her like a servant. I couldn't stand it. She didn't seem to notice — just worked with the flowers an' sat there in the sun near the garden wall.'

They went downstairs, stood in the hall a moment, the caretaker talking on and on, so they couldn't go.

'If I could rent it — even a month — a week or two — now it's so late in the season,' she urged, following them out of the front door.

Neville bowed. 'Could we have a little time to consider — talk it over together?'

She smiled, retreated, as they stood out near the the fuchsias in the sunshine.

'Nora, could you — you and I for a few days together? Coming this way — the old place — it's like a kind of childhood dream. As if we'd been here before. Darling — if you could ——'

She swayed toward him. To make a decision such as this, in a chance moment, standing there, the eye of the worried caretaker upon her ——

'I'd arrange everything, dearest, everything. You

know what we've said — that if we could have only a short space of time together — not cheated out of everything —— You, dearest, that night in the churchyard waiting for Reggie ——'

'Yes, I — I know,' she gasped, clutching his hand.

'I mustn't — I ought not — appeal to you that way. My being — not well. But if it ended to-morrow — and you and I — even a few hours ——'

'I — I'm afraid,' she shuddered.

'If I felt that I'd lived — ever —— You told me that you — nothing you really wanted — until you and I ——'

'Yes,' she agreed sadly.

'I must — I must snatch at it before it's too late. Happiness for us both.'

She locked her hands tightly together.

'A real home with you — how I've longed for it, my darling.'

Of course she would do anything to make him happy. He knew she would.

Hand in hand, they went back to the caretaker. Yes, they would take the house for two weeks. It fitted in well with their plans. They could come in the morning.

VI

Mrs. Pentillie's dinner was over when Nora returned, but they sent a tray upstairs to her room. She was very tired, she explained, and had some packing to finish. In the morning they crowded around the jingle when

Mr. Pentillie was ready to take her to the station. Adeline Pinks and her aunt both kissed Nora, Mrs. Pentillie hoped she would come again. The Quaker husband and wife invited her to visit them in Sheffield before she went back to America. She took the London train, got off at the next station, and there Neville waited for her according to their plan.

'No, no, I'm not sorry,' she assured him when he took her in his arms.

'My darling,' he whispered over and over again, 'my generous darling girl.'

Mrs. Tamar, who regarded all residents in her mistress's house as interlopers to be endured only for the sake of profit, took good care of them. It was her duty. But she had no interest in these strangers, or any others. Nice enough people. No trouble. Tearing around the cliffs on bright days and not in the house much. This, Neville declared, was Mrs. Tamar's estimate of Nora and him. She served them at meals in her brown dresses, which were always of the same cut and color, a part of her, like an outer skin, hide, or plumage, over which she wore white aprons several sizes too large. Neville carved the joints, Nora poured the coffee in the oak-panelled dining-room with the rough stone floor, the candles on the table making long shadows over the two of them and Mrs. Tamar, as she came in and out. A bent little man, Mr. Tamar, with whom they seldom spoke, worked, when his wife's eye was upon him, in the vegetable garden back of the house.

Every morning, when they went through the garden and over the stile in the stone hedge toward the sea, the only person they ever met was a lame old man, Mr. Bunny, from the farmhouse he pointed at between them and Roswithiel. With his dog, he was going after his sheep, which fed in the grassy crevices of the rocks close to the sea.

'You want to watch him bring up the sheep?' he asked Nora one morning as he limped past her. He always addressed her instead of Neville. 'They're a stubborn flock, them sheep, but he gets 'em.'

The dog was barking and circling round his master. 'Go for 'em, Roy,' he commanded at last.

He hobbled down the steep trail, Nora after him. Neville would wait at the top. It was, Nora agreed, a splendid sight to see the dog assemble the sheep and bring them in a sober procession away from their favorite feeding-grounds.

'I told you he'd do it,' chuckled Mr. Bunny. Then he examined Nora with his funny little eyes. 'American lady, be ye? We have 'em hereabouts. I read an American book once, when I was a lad. About a fugitive slave. Ran away from his master. Through swamps and rivers. I knowed that book most by heart. Every winter — sittin' tight up t' the fire, I'd read it over ag'in.'

In Nora he saw reflected the glory of this remarkable volume of his youth. He repeated over and over again, as they climbed the cliff, the one story he had read.

Neville sat in the bright morning sunshine waiting for Nora. He turned his eyes, with their indolent, half-cynical tilt upon her, and responded to her smile with the expression, at once bantering and tender, which so instantly transformed him.

'I missed you so — my darling.' She sat down close to him, pressing his hand. 'Those few minutes. I was like a forlorn little boy — like one of those lambs you felt so sorry for that day — lost from its mother.'

A week passed. Sun, rain, it made no difference to them. Sometimes Mrs. Tamar's eyes upon them had a less bleak look. They were happy people. Even Mrs. Tamar must know that.

The larks had never sung with more emancipated delight in their song than during those flying, flying days. Nora and Neville were like larks. Swooping up and up — never out of breath, those marvellous birds, always singing, always seeking the sun.

The two of them sitting quietly on a rock high above the sea told each other that their bodies had dropped away, that everything had dropped away, the past, the future. Memory was gone. But for the present they had a kind of transfigured experience, sharpened senses, a keenness of sight, hearing, smell, which had never been theirs before. And never were they tired — in the morning, or at night. This was living what only a few knew — the marks of it on their faces. People passing them on the street saw that here were human beings who were different. Not poor creatures breathing, filling

their lungs with air, letting it out again, respiration, heartbeats, food, digestion, pains. Not that alone. But full crowded vital existence for them. Making beauty of it, reality. Mrs. Tamar — surely even Mrs. Tamar could see that they were happy.

In the night Nora sometimes awoke from troubled dreams with a muffled cry of fear. Or at dawn when the first light stole into the room, she had a moment of terror when she looked at the motionless figure lying beside her so still. But he was sleeping peacefully, and she, too, slept again. If he had any such moments, she never knew. Their two weeks were almost over. They might stay three, four, on and on through the summer. One day and then another — that was all.

One blustering morning they had climbed down to a shelter in the rocks, where they could look out for miles over the sea and at the same time be protected from the wind. They could see Mr. Bunny hobbling down after his sheep, leaping with the help of his stick from one rock to another like a goat.

'Wonderful old chap — that Bunny of yours, Nora,' said Neville lazily as he puffed at his pipe.

The peace of their snug little chamber was so perfect that they were reluctant to leave it at lunch-time.

'But we'll come back and spend the afternoon,' Nora said, looking down at Mr. Bunny not far below them.

At the top Neville paused. The same deep flush and then the pallor.

'Just a minute — if I lie here ——'

Mr. Bunny was not far away. She called to him, her voice carried forward by the wind. He saw her, waved, began to turn his direction toward her.

'Nora — I — my dearest.' His eyes closed. 'Reggie — to him —— My dear — dear ——' She clung to his chilly hand, held his head against her breast.

A voice behind her. Mr. Bunny was saying something. 'He's gone — gone,' he whispered close to her ear.

They were a long way beyond the house, close to the Roswithiel Road, which went on to Trebavas. She remembered Mr. Bunny's horse and wagon making journeys between the two villages.

'Take him to — to his friend — the rector in Trebavas,' she gasped out. 'Quick! Quick!'

Mr. Bunny placed a horny finger on Neville's white cheek, felt at his heart. He shook his head. 'He's dead. While I was standin' here behind ye.'

But Mr. Bunny understood that he was to go after his horse and wagon, fortunately all ready to start to Trebavas after dinner. In his stupid, bewildered way he followed her directions as best he could.

All the way to Trebavas she sat on the floor of the jolting wagon holding Neville in her arms. But she knew as well as Mr. Bunny that nothing could be done. They halted outside the rectory gate. The lazy horse waited with drooping head until his master came back with the clergyman.

Reggie looked at Nora, then at the burden in her arms. He and Mr. Bunny carried the limp figure into the house, climbed the stairs, and laid him on the bed, Nora following them. Then the old man, muttering to himself, clumped awkwardly down the stairs.

Reggie knelt beside his friend. Then he rose and held out his hand to Nora. They had not spoken a word.

'Let me — let me get you some tea,' he said. 'You must be very tired.'

He led her out of the room. In a few confused words she tried to tell him what had happened. While she talked, his tortured eyes never left her face.

'I — I must get away before you send — for — for his wife. She mustn't know. He was with you — with you all the time. When he — you found him ——'

'Yes,' he said, 'I understand.'

'Help me — help me to get away.'

She must allow him to drive her to the station as soon as the doctor went away. Then he could send a wire to Neville's wife from Pelreath. He waited below while she went upstairs. When she returned, he was standing in the centre of the room where she had left him.

At the station, they had a few minutes to wait. He took her hand, holding it as if he had forgotten to release it.

'You will — you will write me when you are safe in London. I shall not rest until I hear.' There was something in his eyes which made her heart beat with fresh pain. 'You will. Promise me. And afterward — in

America —— If I could know you were all right — quite all right.'

She nodded her head, unable to speak. The train was coming. Reggie still clung to her hand. 'If ever — anything — anything I can do. For Neville and me both — a kindness.'

The evening glow swept Reggie's face as she, from the train, watched him standing on the wind-swept platform, surrounded by the desolate Cornish moors. She closed her eyes and locked her lips tight together.

VII

In the American Express Office in London Nora found a long-delayed cable and a letter from the President of Petersfield. She stood in the room crowded with her countrymen and read the cable. It meant nothing. They wanted her — for what? She read the letter. They had created a new office at Petersfield, that of dean, an academic as well as a social dean, the President was careful to explain, whose function it would be to assist him in building up a new kind of Petersfield. She was the unanimous choice of the faculty, the alumnæ, the trustees. The new Petersfield, she, Nora Deming, could help to make a force in American education.

Nora tottered toward a divan against the wall. She read the letter once more. Then she began to laugh. She laughed until the tears ran down her cheeks. She mopped them away, but again they splashed upon her

face, her hands, the letter which she held in her trembling fingers. The Americans all around her paid no attention to the small red-haired woman laughing there on the sofa. They were busy reading their letters. So she went on and on, all by herself, with shaking, hysterical laughter.

CHAPTER III

I

Nora was on the train taking her from Maronac to Petersfield. During the week she had spent in Maronac, Mrs. Pancratz, the Bohemian woman who had been Cordelia's helper in periods of stress, serving her at the end, had protected Nora from every one: from Lizzie Guildford arriving the first day, insisting that Nora would want to see her, even from Della coming to show her little boy. From the front window one morning she had caught a glimpse of Amy Henderson hurrying to Weyhausen's store, still looking like a girl of twenty, as elaborately fashionable as she had been then. But she could not bring herself to see any of them. She must have a sanctuary, a hiding-place for her bruised body. Every day, as the echoing house became more and more dismantled, she had the desperate sense that it was being torn away from her, one wall after another, one board, another, until there would be no place, nothing behind which she could stifle her mad, quivering passion, her helpless cries. It was over at last. The house, on the edge of the new industrial district which had sprung up since the war, was sold to the Aluminum Company, and the heavy mahogany and walnut furniture made by the old English cabinet worker, the friend of Cordelia's father, was on its way to Petersfield.

Nora would never see Maronac again. On the last night, before she went to her room in the German hotel across the river, where she and Cordelia had often eaten their Sunday dinners, she had walked down to the beach, and in the beating wind which made her cling to the railing walked out on the pier toward the lighthouse, winking over the lake. She had looked down at the churning water, had hesitated, loosened her hand clutching the iron support, and then turned and gone slowly back toward the town.

In an hour, she would be back in Petersfield, back to the old life. In the night, when she had lain in her berth hour after hour listening to the clicking rails, she had marvelled at the meek obedience of the human spirit. Why was she going back to Petersfield? What could she do there or anywhere?

From the first, that night in the Exeter hotel, the cathedral chimes jangling mad tunes through her head, those other terrible nights in the Bedford Place lodging-house in London, on the boat coming home, she had never had any illusions. What sentimentalists had written, babbled among themselves about living in the spirit, not allowing the dead to depart from one's life, holding them close to the heart, keeping them, she had never, even in her quieter, exhausted moments, heeded. All of life crowded into a few feverishly happy days, and then wrenched from her. She was only an automaton now, jerked about with no will of her own. She had clutched at Petersfield as the first support which

had offered itself, and now she clung to it with feeble desperation.

With only a few minutes left before she must get off the train, see the mob of students gathered at the station, direct her hazy, jaded powers sufficiently to descend and be conveyed to the college, she shut her eyes before the prospect of what she had driven herself to do.

The porter was beside her. 'Brush ye off, madam?'

The familiar Petersfield hills spun past her. Some strange girls were chattering the familiar college jargon at the opposite end of the car. She put on her hat, stood motionless while the porter worked with his brush, and then fell against the seat, the car whirling round and round in nauseous circles.

The train was slowing up. She looked out. There stood the girls, in their brilliant sport clothes and graceful shorn heads, talking and laughing together, waving toward the train. Youth was beautiful — so full of hope. She, once, like them —— The same old station, the steps, the lame porter who always remembered her. She felt something crashing within her, the blood coursing swiftly through her veins. The old life unchanged. Tears dropped unnoticed from her eyes.

This was her life, here in Petersfield. The lame man took her bag, touched his cap. With downcast eyes she passed through the animated, darting crowd on the platform, and her taxi carried her quickly to the college and through its gates. The buildings draped in ivy,

the advanced guard of students in white, yellow, lavender, rose, fluttering over the green of the lawns like butterflies, the grey towers rising above old trees — never since she came there as a freshman for the first time had the beauty of Petersfield so touched her, encompassed her. Here, after all, was the place where she must find peace.

Ruth Ewing in Faculty Hall held Nora in her arms and kissed her. 'I've missed you so, my dear. No one else here like you. Why didn't you tell us when you were coming? We wanted to be down at the station to welcome you, our distinguished member from foreign parts. Miss Steele trotted over twice this morning to see if you had arrived.'

'I'm glad to be back,' Nora said quickly, conscious that Ruth's scientific eye was upon her.

'You look tired, my dear. You mustn't be too ambitious right away.'

'How is Miss Steele?'

'I must warn you. She's very changed. It's high blood pressure and a kind of nervous exhaustion. Of course, she ought to rest.'

'It would kill her,' Nora reminded her.

'Yes, I know. But she's killing herself this way. She's so rebellious against her infirmity. A kind of mad rage. She has falling spells. Last year she was brought home twice in a very bad condition. But she won't stop. We're hoping you can do something with her.'

'Never. I'll never interfere with her.'

Ruth Ewing shook her head.

While Nora was unpacking, one visitor after another came into her room, all of them with hearty congratulations for themselves and for Petersfield that she was to be their Dean. Nora listened to them quietly, trying to respond to what their conception of a dean must be. Judicial and enigmatic, possibly. But how did one look that? On the campus the students she had known, stopped her, told her how glad they were she was back, how much they had missed her.

Before dinner that night Miss Steele plunged into her room.

'Well,' she began with a vigorous handshake. 'I told them to get you here, Nora. I refused to listen, to consider any one else. If we're to be reformed, I told them, let one of our own who knows us cast the first stone.'

'I don't know about stones,' Nora laughed.

Miss Steele sat down. She now wore two sets of spectacles, one on top of the other, but in spite of them she betrayed the indecisive movements of a person whose sight is fast going. When she was in repose, her face dropped into strange, bewildered lines. Her hands twitched as she tried to hold them tightly together. She scraped back and forth on the bare floor one foot encased in the Congress boot which had inspired campus humor for twenty years.

'Have they told you?' she burst out finally. 'The President will talk to you when you see him in the

morning. They tell me I ought to resign — hint at it. Advise me to rest — to give myself a little leisure to write my books. Leisure after all these years! What would I do with it? Without my students, why should I write books? I write to help them. If I — if I resign ——'

'How ridiculous! You to give up. I shan't listen to such nonsense.'

'You mean it, Nora? You don't think for the good of the college ——'

'I'm depending on you to get me started here.'

'That's what I hoped. But I — I'm an old woman.'

'You're a wise woman also,' Nora added. 'I shall tell the President that without you to run the department ——'

Miss Steele took out her handkerchief — she always bought the large squares devoted usually to masculine necessity — and blew her nose like a trumpet. According to her old-fashioned ladylike code nothing could have been more degrading than such a public exhibition. But a show of emotion belonged to even lower depths. At times one must choose the lesser of two evils.

'Well, then,' she said in her characteristic hurried fashion, 'I must be off.' She wrung Nora's hand. 'Don't try to do everything at once, young woman. Our ancient evils will keep a year or two while you're getting started.'

'I want to talk over a few of my ideas with you. Some of them you won't like, Miss Steele.'

'Of course, I won't. But are you running this college to please me? Some of them won't please the President. I know you well enough for that, Nora Deming.' The door banged behind her retreating figure.

That night, when the footsteps in Faculty Hall and the high, eager voices of the girls outside had ceased, Nora, before she went to bed, looked at herself in her mirror. Ruth Ewing had immediately seen the change in her face with those searching, kind eyes. A few weeks ago the daily reflection which met her was that of an ignorant, careless girl. But already it was beginning to show faint traceries of lines. Not caverns, trenches, only delicate pencillings around the nose and mouth, a kind of veil over the eyes, as if their owner no longer dared to look straight out at the world. This was age, so long delayed, but coming quickly now at thirty-two. Age — she welcomed age. It meant the inevitable end.

Nora took out a photograph in an old-fashioned mahogany frame and looked at the happy-faced young woman wearing puffed sleeves and a festoon of lace around her throat, and a little boy standing beside her, a serious, handsome child of five or six, with a plump hand clutching the silken folds of his mother's dress. She regarded it steadily for several moments, and then hid it away in the drawer of the table beside her bed.

Work — only work to drive away that cutting, scalding memory. She would work. Never stop. Philosophers down through the ages have praised work. One can work when everything else is torn away. One

takes it up first for relief, escape. Then in the end it is life — all of life.

But until then — until one forgets — when what she and Neville in a few summer weeks had known was everything — even in those breathless moments there had been time to measure it. For her, love had been immediate, irretrievable mating, the complete kind which comes only once. She remembered her stumbling experiments in chemistry, those mysterious combinations, reactions which she had watched over in the laboratory, foreign elements bearing no outward resemblance to each other, but coming together with such instantaneous, inevitable force. Love for her and Neville had been like that. Dwellers in far-removed parts of an indifferent planet, living many aimless, weary years before they came together, and then close — close.

But there was no escape from the spinning of her mind. Restless, active, it went on and on. Reaching out into the future — carrying her tired body along with it. It had dragged her back to this old life. Now it stood over her, beating her into plans for action. To-morrow when she saw the President — what was she going to tell him? What she herself had discovered, freedom, escape from fear — that she would try to give to the Petersfield girls.

Even on the boat bringing her home, she already understood herself. She understood Cordelia — all women. She was sure that she saw clearly how she

could protect them from some of the taboos, the restrictions, the detachments which had held her down. They must cease being afraid — afraid of themselves, of sex, of truth, of life and death. She no longer feared any of these things. Once more, as on the train, the blood leaped within her, brought fire to her brain, warmth through her whole body. Life — one couldn't escape it. Even joy.

II

When Nora saw the President in the morning, he began the conversation by lamenting the fact that Professor Steele was no longer what she once was.

Nora drew up her small figure to the most impressively expanded deanly proportions. 'But even now, there is no one at Petersfield to equal her,' she said firmly.

'Perhaps not — perhaps not,' he admitted, tapping his eyeglasses nervously against the arm of his chair. Professor Steele was a strong-minded, exasperating woman, as Miss Deming well knew. Perhaps all strong-minded women were exasperating. The President had his playful glances at humor. Petersfield had been founded to produce such a race, and it had nobly fulfilled its destiny.

Nora could follow the thoughts of the President as he sat solemnly measuring her capacity for her new job. By the time the Dean was forty-five, she might succeed him. Alumnæ were always clamoring to honor their

own sex. But Miss Deming looked so small and innocent sitting there, not easily distinguishable from the undergraduates, whose destinies she held in her thin, nervous fingers.

He repeated the future policy of Petersfield, which he had already outlined in the letter he had sent Nora in London. Hereafter, the college was to be restricted to the best applicants, not to the daughters of alumnæ, those with the most flawless genealogies, or the most eulogistic recommendations from school heads respecting charm, school spirit, and attractive appearance. Mental tests, records of preparatory schools, were to be the decisive factors. With hundreds battering at its doors for admission, Petersfield could, at last, afford to be exclusive. And for the final choice of this superior student body, the young women who respected intelligence and learning and were willing for four years to devote themselves to the exercise of the mind, and for their general guidance, the new office of dean had been created. The President's voice took on a warm tone as he expanded his theme.

'I've been thinking over many plans,' Nora told him.

'Oh, yes,' agreed the President, determined that Petersfield should march in the vanguard of the college processional.

'Some of them may be a mistake. But this first year I'd like to make a few experiments.'

'We must proceed with caution,' warned the President.

In her opening address in chapel, the new Dean announced to the students of Petersfield that their college was in the future to be a place for responsible women, for women who were capable of deciding their own course of action, not for children in leading strings. But they had for so many years been addressed in public as women and treated afterward as wayward children that they only smiled politely at the eager, red-haired woman, who stood, a small figure in the folds of her academic gown, on the edge of the chapel rostrum.

By degrees Nora explained to the President what she wanted to do.

'I want women to go to college as men do — completely free. If they make mistakes ——'

'But I can't see that freedom in men's colleges has brought about praiseworthy results. Quite the contrary.'

'Because at the same time with freedom high standards of scholarship have never been insisted upon. If a girl devotes herself to dancing, musical comedies, and a tour of the men's colleges at Prom time, and her work suffers, she goes home. She can be social there. We criticize women for lack of independent thinking, for shifting around instead of coming directly to the point, for cringing before authority, for lying, for using the feminine weapons of flattery, tears, hysteria. And these are the great sins.' Nora's large reddish-brown eyes held the President in their spell. 'I'd rather see the girls of Petersfield drunk ——'

At the Dean's words the President fell back as if, Nora surmised sitting quietly opposite, she had taken the paper-knife lying on the desk beside him and stabbed him to the heart.

'Than full of deceit,' Nora concluded, with the suspicion of a smile flitting over her lips.

'Drink for women ——' the President said in an awed voice.

'They won't drink. They never have in my experience. We generally leave that kind of adventurous escape from reality to men. Of course college girls have experimented. The last class day I was here two delightful graduates of the class of 1872 told me about three girls of their year sitting down after dinner to see how much they could take before they lost consciousness. They were sent home the next morning. They seem to have got rather maudlin and wandered about. And the old ladies themselves used to smoke pipes — corncob pipes I think they said — in their rooms late at night with towels fastened over the keyholes. They were very proud telling it. And girls in those days were watched over faithfully enough, weren't they?'

The President permitted himself to smile. But he confided to the Dean the difficulties of his position. She was new to administrative responsibilities. If she understood — the worst thing was the newspapers — if reporters got hold of the slightest indiscretion ——

'But we can't run a college with one eye on the newspapers,' Nora insisted.

'That is exactly what we have to do,' he informed her.

'I'll take the responsibility. If we are disgraced before the world, I'll resign at once. Resign any time you think I have failed to make my policies work out for the good of the college.'

When Nora repeated to Miss Steele what she had outlined for the President, the head of the history department suppressed something close to a groan which rose instinctively from her throat.

'Well,' she admitted, 'we've made mistakes enough the old way. I'm willing to try something new. But I warn you, Nora Deming, you're embarking upon a stony, uphill road.'

'I know it,' Nora answered her.

The matrons of the residence halls, in too many cases substitutes for the parental tyranny which some girls came to college to escape, were ready for open rebellion when they were informed that hereafter Petersfield girls should go and come, even to New York, as they pleased, without questionings from them. One after another sat in the Dean's office, concluding lengthy objections to this dangerous policy with the words, 'They're children — mere children.'

'Of course they're too young. But while educators are getting the junior colleges established, we must use forcing processes to make these girls grow up.'

Robbing college girls of their infantile charm — their dependence — women grown grey in nursery service at

Petersfield often burst into angry tears when they left the Dean's office.

None of the older professors had suspected the iron will of the quiet young woman they remembered in the history department, with great scholarly promise, Professor Steele and others had said. That she had already converted to her sudden revolutions the President, Professor Steele, Professor Ewing, and others old and responsible enough to know better, seemed incredible. They could only wait for disaster to tumble down upon her, to tumble down upon them all.

There were days when the Dean no longer looked young. One could almost imagine her as an old woman. Those who watched her with hostility were conscious of the grim, settled lines of her mouth, the fixed light in her eyes. Even Professor Steele admitted that her favorite pupil was a changed person. So emotionless, they said among themselves, almost like a man. She seemed indifferent to their concerted attacks, their united antagonism. She showed no resentment, treated them with an unchanged courtesy, deference almost, which was more maddening than blows. At times she smiled at them with the sweetness of a pitying angel.

For her teaching her critics gave her generous praise. They approved of her honesty, her unwillingness to use cheap tricks to win the guileless undergraduate heart, so defenceless against high-sounding words. If students crowded Miss Deming's brilliant lectures, it was because she had a vivid creative power, a concentration of

thought, which Miss Steele admitted she had never equalled even in her best days. The professors who attended her public lectures on contemporary Europe told her that she knew so much more than history. If Miss Deming had had less energy to spread over all of Petersfield, she might have had only friends there.

Two months later, the college had still escaped the newspapers. But daily the President foresaw disaster ahead. To all outward appearance, however, the undergraduates seemed to go on the same way. They may not have had time to measure the extent of new privileges. Already a small weeping procession of the unfit had been reunited to their parents, but not many. The surprisingly meagre number encouraged the promoters of the new entrance requirements. The right kind of students didn't seem to need police regulation.

At the meetings of the committee on instruction the Dean proposed for the next year a larger faculty. For years it had been inadequate to handle students effectively. New buildings went up, but the teaching staff had had almost no increase in numbers. Miss Deming also wanted more men to teach at Petersfield — not mere men, but the best men. They needn't live in Petersfield. It would be better for them if they didn't. Men who had made distinguished contributions to history, science, literature, the arts could be induced to spend part of their time at a college so easily available from New York. Of course such a policy was expensive.

But it was time Petersfield spent money on brains as well as on bricks.

'What about introducing good women into men's colleges?' interrupted Professor Steele.

'I admit they need good women as much as we need good men. But it's not within our power to reform men's colleges,' Nora told her.

'You have moments of illumination, young woman,' snorted Miss Steele amidst general laughter.

The introduction of good men was accepted calmly enough by the faculty. Perhaps they were too feminine at Petersfield. But when the Dean one night at dinner in Faculty House expanded another of her theories, that of introducing married women, mothers with children, into their teaching ranks, even Professor Steele, who was a guest that night, thought she also must interfere.

'Married women getting everything — even the jobs away from us, who depend on them,' she shouted at Nora.

'Well,' Nora smiled, 'I might compromise on widows.'

'Widows!' they chorused.

'Mothers who have children to support — if they have academic equipment equal to ours — are surely not objectionable. The very best widows,' she added, looking around the table.

In Ruth Ewing's room after dinner, Nora was examined further by her old friend. 'Why are you so keen about widows? Really, my dear, you put on all the airs of a successfully married woman.'

Ruth's scientific detachment encouraged frankness. 'Because they wouldn't idealize the facts of life, sentimentalize them, be timid about what we stigmatize too often as nastiness, the low side of life, what only men can talk about now without blushing.' In her haste Nora's words tumbled over one another.

'Where did you get so much wisdom? In England, my dear?'

Nora blushed. 'I know I'm right,' she answered.

One afternoon, following an unusually exhausting session with the old régime, Nora walked rapidly out of town along the Eastchester Pike, with the snowless fields of late November stretching out on all sides a dreary brown. Turning away from the main thoroughfare and going up a little hill, she discovered a road nearly hidden by a clump of cedar trees, which she had never seen before. It appeared so quiet and untravelled, with an atmosphere of such peace and seclusion, that she felt as if she had opened a secret door leading quite out of the world. Perched on a hillock at a twist in the road was a small pumpkin-colored house with green blinds, with the hills sweeping around it. When she approached, she found it untenanted, the front door blowing back and forth on its hinges. It was of the usual Dutch cottage style, consisting of a large room with a fireplace opening off from the narrow hall which divided the house, two rooms on the other side for a dining-room and kitchen, and three low bedrooms upstairs. The plaster had long since dropped from the walls, a

few panes of glass were broken, but the floors were solid, the foundations strong.

The poor little place — Nora loved it. She wanted it. If she had a home, it might be safe to drive herself less relentlessly. Already she was tired — very tired, and this quiet, lonely house ——

A week later Nora had bought the pumpkin-colored cottage, and an architect was contriving the smallest possible number of renovations. The stream at the foot of the hill, the closeness to Eastchester Pike, made his plans so simple that the contractor prophesied Miss Deming would eat her Christmas dinner in her own home. But Nora, understanding the characteristic optimism of his business, estimated that the joys of her own fireside would be delayed until February or early March.

III

A few days before Christmas, Margaret Campbell entered the Dean's office. She had been a student of Nora's two years before, an eccentric but able girl, kept in college by scholarships. Nora, with her memory for detail, remembered that her father was a farmer in Iowa.

The girl took the seat Nora offered her, but stared in front of her without speaking.

'You wanted to consult me about something?' Nora began to encourage her.

She gulped, worked her hands nervously together,

and then the words shot out after a painful effort. 'I — I can't come back to college after Christmas.'

'The scholarship isn't enough? I'm sure we can help you a little. You're a senior, with a good record. I'm sure a loan to tide you over this last year can easily be managed.'

'It isn't money. I know how to get along without money.'

'Tell me, please.'

'It's — I — I'm going to have a child. I've got to go home, I suppose.'

Margaret Campbell, not pretty or frivolous, with a kind of rigid Scotch Calvinism about her, was the last student who would seem likely to bring such a problem to the Dean's office.

She looked at Nora with a defiant and tearless despair, adding, 'An Iowa farm is not the place I want to go to now.'

At first she refused to make any explanations. Finally she began to cry. No one would understand, Dean Deming least of all. She had a job in New York the preceding summer and shared an apartment with a Petersfield girl who had graduated the year before. On the street one day she met the boy she had invited to her Prom. Just a boy. A stranger to her. One of her friends had arranged about his coming. Junior Prom was the first college party she had ever attended. The girls said she must go. One of them lent her a dress, another a light evening wrap. She bought nothing but slippers,

not stockings even. She hadn't seen the boy since. But he was working in New York, too, last summer, knew almost no one. She asked him to the apartment. They went out together a little. Then her friend — the other girl — had her summer vacation. She was gone two weeks. And then ——

He was still in college. A junior. Younger than she. And with no money. She hadn't told him. He wasn't even in love with her, wrote to her only seldom, was planning to study medicine if he could manage it. And she — if it hadn't been for this —— No, she didn't love him. He wasn't the kind she'd want to marry. If all this trouble —— She hated him. He ought to have known better. He was so sure that he —— Only in the end did she admit that the blame was equally hers.

At first she had desperate thoughts. Now she didn't care. But she didn't want to go home. If there were some kind of institution — she would work — do anything — if she could hide what had happened from her parents.

'It was never having any fun,' she wept, hiding her face on Nora's desk. 'Working every summer — working at anything I could get here at college. Finally hating everything —— And I knew I was the kind that wouldn't get married. When I saw the other girls ——'

'Yes,' Nora agreed, 'I can understand that.'

Nora's interview with the President was long and painful. Even though Margaret Campbell's disgrace had no connection with the Dean's reforms, it roused all

his fears. Nora saw all that she had worked for threatened with immediate destruction. But she reminded him of similar tragedies in Petersfield history. She assumed the burden of all the arrangements: the place in the country, no other than Amelia's colony, where Margaret could support herself for three or four months working for the emancipated; she sent the announcement to the college paper that Margaret Campbell because of illness would be unable to return to college until the next fall; and the day before Christmas she settled Margaret under Amelia's care.

Nora tried to temper Amelia's enthusiastic championship of this brave girl's motherhood by reminding her that Margaret didn't want to be a mother, was sure she disliked children, and that Margaret's child, conceived so carelessly, had not the most secure future.

'Of course she'll want him,' declared Amelia, who like many feminists thought only in terms of boy babies, 'when she sees him. It will be delightful to have a baby here at the colony. We've never had one before.'

All that Margaret thought of was some escape from her maternal responsibilities.

'If I never had to see it — if you'd take it away,' she wept when Nora kissed her good-bye.

'You don't need to keep your child,' Nora promised her, as she had countless times before. 'We'll find some way.'

In January the pumpkin-colored cottage was ready for Nora. Her only neighbor was a wealthy landowner,

who had a colony of Russian tenant farmers distributed over his expansive acres. Amelia, with her interest in the Russian soul, had discovered them on one of Helen's and her week-end visits. A young husband and wife occupied the cottage only a few steps from Nora's front door. The woman, only a girl, always smiling to cover her inability to speak English, was eager to work for Nora. She was preparing for her first baby, and she needed money.

With Mitya's help Nora placed Cordelia's furniture in the bright fresh rooms, the walnut bookcases going up to the ceiling, the walnut secretary and high-backed chair, the solid table, the picture of Queen Victoria and her grandchildren, and that of Warwick Castle. Margaret Abington's painting was between the two south windows. The old mirror hung in the hall. The mahogany card-table and corner cupboard with the Lowestoft china were placed in the dining-room.

'Be-utiful,' said Mitya, who was already in these first days beginning to speak English.

But the house, after Mitya had gone home to get Peter's supper — Peter the Great Nora called the tall blond husband — was, in spite of its venerable, solid beauty and its bright cretonnes, very lonely and quiet. Peter thought Nora ought to have a dog. Mitya inclined toward a kitten.

In the clock-ticking stillness of the living-room one blustering January night, Nora stood in the window watching the snow rise like spray — like the sea —

above the fields as the wind swept over them. Reggie had written that people couldn't live on memory — even perfect memory. He had written her this when he sent Neville's picture, the only one he had, of a little boy and his mother. She must have something else. He was right. Her duties at the college crowded her time, but she was so lonely, so unutterably lonely. There was a chance that this — this fugitive thought which visited her day and night — was after all what she needed. She would settle it now.

She sat down at the walnut secretary and wrote to Margaret that she would take the baby. If Margaret wanted her own child when he came, she would waive all claim, but otherwise she wanted the baby.

IV

One morning in May Professor Deming did not meet any of her classes. She had been called away, the announcement on the bulletin board read. She was gone three days. In the midst of final examinations the story got around that the Dean had adopted a baby, a very young baby already established in her house off the Eastchester Pike. The girls thought it was a tremendous joke. Dean Deming of all people!

Professor Steele collided with Ruth Ewing a few moments after the astonishing report had reached her. 'She would never take such a step without consulting me,' Professor Steele pronounced majestically.

Miss Ewing had to admit that she had seen the baby, a boy, a splendid, healthy child.

'Ridiculous. A male child at that!' stormed Miss Steele.

'But it turned out to be a boy,' Ruth let out inadvertently.

'What's that?' shouted Miss Steele, who, although she insisted that she was getting deaf, had her periods of amazing audition.

'She'll tell you all about it.'

Miss Steele could not find Nora in the Dean's office. Determined not to be baffled, she started out on the country road. Nora came to the door in answer to the violent clump of the brass knocker.

'What's this I hear about you, Nora?' she demanded from the doorstep.

Nora led her into the house, guided her over the strange rugs, and settled her in the chair near the window.

'You shouldn't have walked out here in the heat,' she protested.

'You telling me nothing,' the older woman thundered. 'It's madness — madness.'

'I wanted to tell you. But I know how easily I'm influenced by your opinion, Miss Steele. If you had disapproved ——'

'Of course I'd have disapproved. Old maids adopting babies. They're all doing it. Couldn't you think of anything more original?'

'You see his mother — she was a student once at Petersfield.'

'So were you. It isn't your child, Nora?' Miss Steele's eyes glittered ironically behind her spectacles.

'I wish he were. But I had to have him. I was sure of that. I want you to see my baby.'

From the foot of the stairs she called to Mitya, who had just finished giving the baby his bottle. Mitya entered the room carrying him on one arm, and smiling at the erect, severe woman in her stiff dress.

'Here he is,' Nora said, taking him from Mitya. 'Richard Tait — after my father and the guardian who left me the money to bring him up.' She dangled him before Miss Steele's disapproving eyes.

Miss Steele's gaze wandered from the curious pink creature Nora held before her to Mitya with her clumsy, comic figure. Mitya continued to smile and twitter an unintelligible jargon to the baby.

'Sit down, please. Do see how soft and warm he feels.'

Miss Steele dropped into a low chair and draped her unyielding arms around the baby. Her hold upon him was uncertain, virginal. Nora seated herself on a stool in front of them.

'Every one says he's a remarkable infant,' Nora confided. 'See how strong his neck is. He's beautifully made. Just look at his legs.'

A deep flush crept into Miss Steele's grey cheeks. She looked embarrassed.

'What's that woman doing here?' she demanded, frowning at Mitya's retreating form.

'She's Dicky's nurse. Mitya. I'm certainly fortunate to have her.'

'You'll have another young one on your hands any day, it looks to me,' prophesied Miss Steele.

'Yes, Mitya's baby comes next month. She might just as well have two babies to look after as one.'

'A pretty mess you'll have here. You'll never finish your book, now.'

'When I'm busy, Mitya will keep the children in her cottage — there at the foot of the hill.' Nora looked over at Dicky. He was very sleepy. He gave a great yawn and stretched out his arms. She must call Mitya to carry him off to bed. 'I've sent for Clara, the maid I was so fond of at Saint Ethelfreda. She's promised to stay the rest of her life.'

Miss Steele shifted the baby in her arms and sighed. 'Why couldn't you have waited, Nora, to have one of your own? I thought — perhaps at Knickerbocker or in England.'

Cordelia's words — the same hope.

Nora shook her head. 'No,' she said, 'no — never.' She hid her face against the arm of Miss Steele's chair. If she could tell her — tell her now. There was no one else she wanted to have know. After the first shock she would understand. But Miss Steele couldn't be given shocks any more. She had to be spared. Nora must make her lie down, and then have a cup of tea before she drove her back to the college.

'Why,' insisted Miss Steele to her dearest pupil, 'why did you do it, Nora?'

Nora lifted her head and smiled. 'Why? To counteract the feminine influence at Petersfield, dear Miss Steele.' Then she reached over and kissed her old teacher on the cheek before she carried the baby to Mitya.

THE END

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A WOMAN'S REVOLT AGAINST A WOMAN'S WORLD-

WE SING DIANA

BY

WANDA FRAIKEN NEFF

WANDA FRAIKEN NEFF

author of 'We Sing Diana' began writing for a children's paper connected with the Minneapolis *Journal* at the age of nine and says that she has been covering paper with experimental writing ever since. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1909, taught in a wide variety of schools and colleges, ranging from Colorado and Wisconsin to New York and Virginia, and acquired an M.A. degree at Columbia in 1917.

She began collecting material for 'We Sing Diana' during the year 1921–1922, when the American Association of University Women sent her to England to study the history of Victorian working women. Instructorships at Barnard and at Vassar gave her contact with contemporary segregated education of women, and marriage in 1925, the necessary leisure, as well as detachment, to begin work on this brilliant and convincing story of a woman who attempts to find creative satisfaction in intellectual work.

She is the wife of Professor Emery Neff of Columbia University and spends most of her time in New York City, which she knows from Harlem to Greenwich Village.

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